

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE GOVERNANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS IN
MALAWI**

NITA CHIVWARA

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Supervisor: Professor Gerald Wangenge-Ouma

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few years researchers have been studying access reforms, as well as uncovering challenges related to systems with low participation rates; Examples of this type of work are Teferra and Altbach (2003), Maharasoa (2003) and World Bank (2008). A key factor often addressed are various reforms related to access policies, often merely descriptions of access reforms in general or the status quo of systems are given, particularly those with low participation rates or needing access reforms (Weber, 2005). The relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education has however not yet been thoroughly examined.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to present the results of an analysis carried out to investigate the research question: Is there a relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education access in Malawi? The access-policy-governance theory whose proponents are Tapper (2005), Ball (1990), Bunting *et al* (2005) and Clark (1983), among others, formed the basis for a proposed framework of evaluating the governance of higher education access in Malawi. The data involved in this study are national educational policies and institutional policy. The second data set are interviews with fourteen personnel who are involved in formulation and implementation of higher education access policies and the governance of higher education, both at a national level in Malawi and institutional level at the University of Malawi.

A conclusion is drawn that the policies which were utilised and the governance structure created from them generated the limited nature of access which characterises Malawi's higher education sector. The policies belonging to the University of Malawi, for example, generated proposed growth in student numbers without drastic changes in the general governance structure of the university. Thus the University of Malawi was unable to maintain the growth that the institutional policies intended. This research is of significance to the domain of governance of access as it extends the knowledge base that currently exists in the field of higher education studies. The concept of linking participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education is relatively under-researched in this field. It is hoped that this study has added to the understanding of this relationship by addressing the significance

of enrolment planning structures in relation to enrolment governance, the development of participation rates in relation to how access is governed and the linkage between government and universities in governing access. The analysis may equip higher education planners, researchers and practitioners who want to make a difference in access policy formulation and the governance of higher education access.

Keywords: Higher education access; participation rates; policy; elite system; governance of enrolments; developing countries; Malawi



DECLARATION

I declare that *An analysis of the governance of higher education access in Malawi* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: NITA CHIVWARA

Date: 15th JANUARY 2013

Signed:



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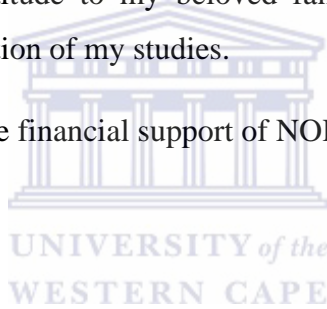
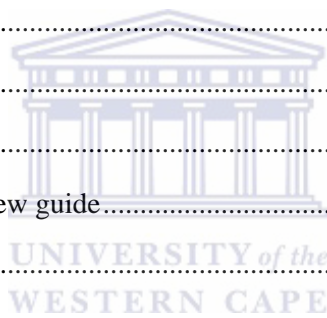


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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Interest in higher education has been renewed since the end of the last century as “most nation states are going through a transformation process that is strongly affected by global trends and pressures” (Maassen & Cloete, 2002:14). The rising global trends and orientations are, among others, rapid technological change, the emergence of the knowledge economy and increasing demand for higher education, instantaneous communication facilities, changing disparities between wealth and poverty and volatile markets (Crossley & Holmes, 1999). The concept of widening higher education participation has emerged among educationalists and governments throughout the world (Jhingyi, 2004). The importance of knowledge, that has been predominantly attained through higher education institutions, as the key factor in transforming society, has been acknowledged throughout history.

There is compelling evidence that the ability to produce, access, possess and apply knowledge by a sizeable group of people is a key determinant of sustained economic growth (World Bank, 2000: 19). Consequently, the attainment of higher education schooling by such groups has been proven to produce public benefits such as increased tax revenues returns and greater efficiency and productivity of work (Mora & Vila, 2003; Bloom *et al*, 2005). Hence, widening participation in higher education has become an important target in the new global economy (Muller *et al*, 2001).

The ideas and forces behind the establishment of most universities in Africa originated in the 1960s during the period marking the beginning of independent states (Teferra & Altbach, 2003). “Sub-Saharan African universities, though existing in various forms before European colonisation, are hybrids of colonial institutions – designed to train an elite skilled class for post-independence governance - and modern institutions preparing African students to be the next leaders in national development” (Bulfin, 2009). Access to higher education has been increasing at 15% a year across the African region, but coverage remains the lowest in the world, less than 5% of the relevant age population (ASARECA, 2008). Higher education in Africa is generally characterised by resilience in the face of extreme circumstances. It has been noted by scholars such as Bulfin (2009) that universities were previously well maintained and living conditions for both students and faculty were on par with universities in the west. The situation however took a different turn in view of the economic downturn of

the 1980s (Bulfin, 2009:5; Chege, 2006:8). As noted by Chege (2006:8) “many African countries accepted proposed reforms by donors such as the World Bank. These reforms entailed that universities should not only be perceived from the developmental perspective but also that that universities should become profit making institutions”. The new paradigm was based on the premise that with the increased funding from increased enrolments, “universities would be able to pay better salaries, re-equip laboratories and provide a better learning environment. As expounded in the next chapter, Makerere University took a leading role in adapting its thinking to this new pattern” (Chege, 2006:8).

Malawi’s post-independence higher education policy was instituted in 1964 with the dawn of independence from British colonial rule. In Malawi, as is the case in the majority of African countries, university access is limited in nature as it has been shaped by colonialism, historical European traditions, the adaptation of western structures in Africa, and higher education policies which arose as a result of many other influences (Chimombo, 2003). Such influences included the replacement of expatriates in the civil service with locals at the time of independence, the influence and shifting ideologies of supranational bodies such as the World Bank and the shift in thinking in the 1980s as higher education in Africa became considered a luxury by the World Bank (Banya & Elu, 2001; Teferra, 2003; Brock-Utne, 2003; Wangenge-Ouma, 2008; MacJessie-Mbewe, 2008).

In economic terms, sub-Saharan Africa lags behind in growth of income per capita with a growth rate of less than 0.5% for the period 1960 to 2000 when compared with other regions and its tertiary enrolment base is also lagging behind with an aggregate gross enrolment of around 5% (Bloom *et al*, 2005). Most policies acknowledge how higher education influences economic well-being through means such as the direct expenditure that the institutions, their employees and students make to the local economy and outside areas through the purchase of goods and services; higher education provides financial and non-financial benefits to the individual who pursues an advanced education and to society in general. Universities are also sources of key research and development innovation that can be beneficial to society and conducive to economic growth (Macerinskiene & Vaiksnoraite, 2006). In view of the important role knowledge plays in socio-economic progress and the prevailing participation rates, it is important for African countries to reform the governance of access. It is in view of the low participation rates that this study sought to investigate the link between *participation rates*, *access policies* and the *governance* of higher education access.

The study is informed by the argument that there is a relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education. Behind this thinking are two assumptions. Firstly, that access policy is an important variable for strong growth in student numbers. The second assumption is that government decisions also impact upon access policy through intervention to enhance equality of educational opportunity by gender, social class and place of residence. Political decisions thus may lead to expansion in the number of available places irrespective of needs in the labour market and the demand of young people as is the case in the Nordic countries where the proportion of the age group enrolled in higher education increased from less than 10% to 50-60% over four decades (Aamodt & Kyvik, 2005: 28).

Kogan & Bleiklie describes governance (2007) as the organization of decision making structures within institutions. Similarly, Ncayiyana and Howard (1999) cites institutional governance as defined by the South African White Paper #3 and Act of 1997. According to this definition the concept relates to the management of higher education institutional affairs, the prescription of regulatory frameworks and aspects of institutional responses to varying requirements. From the above descriptions, at the heart of the governance process is the exercise of authority and power in any given organizational setting (Segal, 2000).

1.2 Brief description of higher education in Malawi

This section provides a very brief description of higher education in Malawi (a detailed description of higher education in Malawi will come in section 2.7). Education structures in Malawi date back to the colonial era and the work of early missionaries. Although post-independence higher education history starts with the University of Malawi (UNIMA) in 1964, the overall need for a university was felt as far back as 1895 when Dr Laws initiated the development of the Overtoun College. From the onset, the policy goal that underpinned higher education in Malawi was to establish a university that would meet the economic and cultural needs of the country. Thus, from early on UNIMA was to educate, train and produce local manpower for medium and high-level managerial positions both in government and the private sector (Chimombo, 2003).

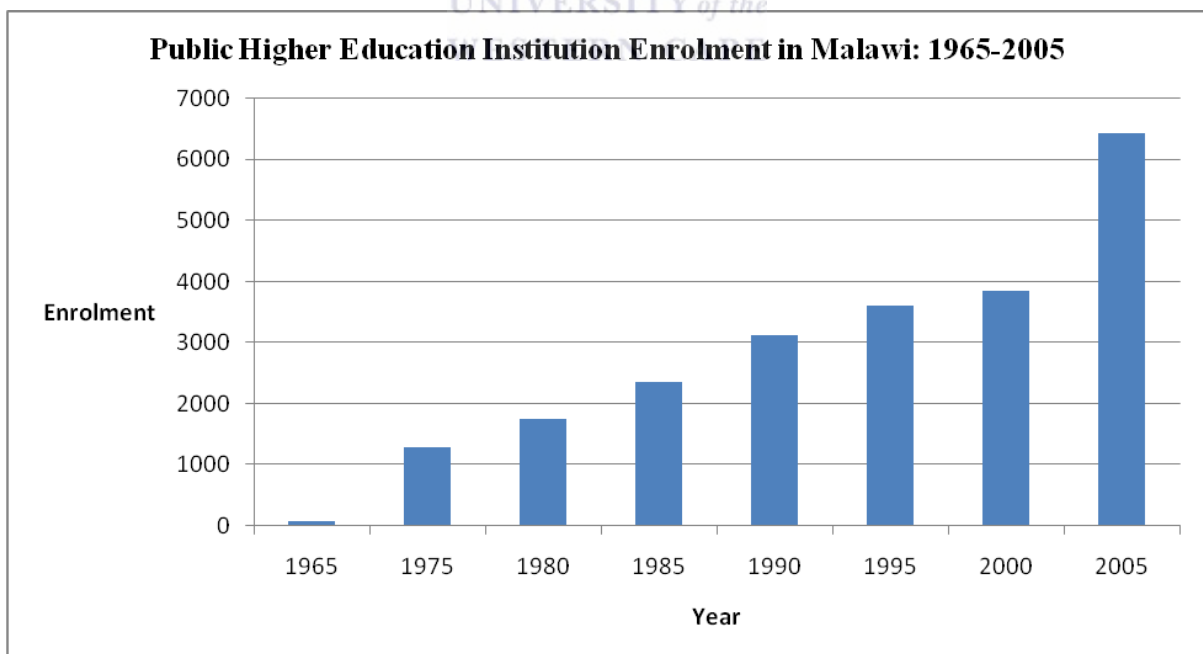
Malawi has two public universities: the University of Malawi and Mzuzu University. The oldest public university, the University of Malawi, admitted its first cohort of 90 students in 1965. In 1994 Mzuzu University was established with its first cohort of 120 students admitted in 1999. Four private universities have since been accredited; Shareworld University which

started offering degrees in 2006, Livingstonia University which was established in 2006, the Catholic University of Malawi which started admitting students in 2006 and the Adventist University of Malawi which was established in 2007 (World Bank, 2009).

The higher education system participation rate in Malawi is among the lowest within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The enrolment in higher education in most SADC countries ranges between 2% and 4%, dropping to 2.2% in Lesotho and 4.9% in Swaziland and rising to 15% and 17% for South Africa and Mauritius respectively (UWN, 2010). The two public universities enrol the majority of students in Malawi. The enrolment in public universities in 2008, for instance, was 8,081 while that for private universities was 988. The enrolment in private universities comprised 12.3% of the total university enrolment. The total university enrolment constituted roughly 0.4% of students of eligible age (World Bank, 2008).

Below, is a table showing enrolments in public higher education institutions from 1965 to 2005. The data shows a general increase in enrolments from 90 in 1965 rising to 6,436 in 2005.

Figure 1.1: Public Higher Education Institution enrolments in Malawi: 1965 – 2005



Sources: University of Malawi, National Statistical Office (2008)

Literature on higher education access in Malawi clearly indicates that there is a high demand for university education in Malawi (Chimombo, 2003; World Bank, 2008). Below are figures representing the trend in the demand for university education. **Table 1.1** shows the numbers of secondary school students who sat for the Malawi School Certificate of Education Certificate (MSCE) and qualified for entry into the university having passed with six credits in six subjects including English language (the minimum criteria).



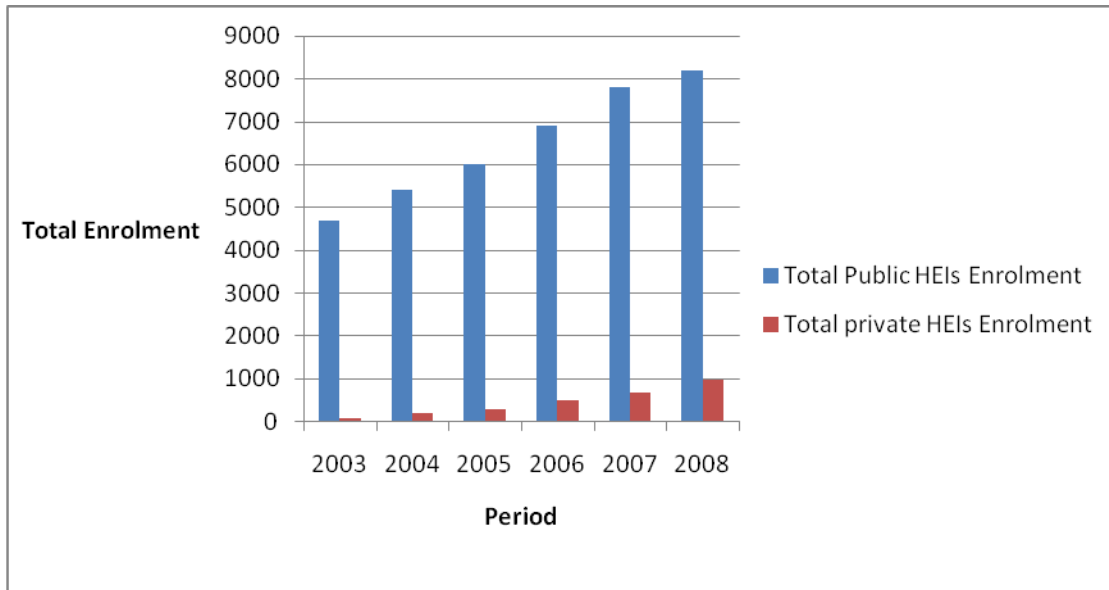
Table 1.1: Number of MSCE candidates who qualified for University admission: 1984 - 2008

YEAR	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008
QUALIFIED MSCE CANDIDATES	506	1,265	1,883	1,528	1,212	4,514	7,263

Source: Malawi National Examinations Board (2009)

Figure 1.2 below displays a growth spurt in the absolute size of enrolments in Malawi from 2003 to 2008. It shows a six year growth rate and absolute size of higher education enrolments in Malawi. In the year 2003 there were slightly over 4,500 students who were enrolled in public higher education institutions while the enrolment in private universities was less than 300 students. The private university sector is a late comer in Malawi because prior to 1994 it was impossible for individuals or organisations to establish a private university due to strict government regulation. For instance, the one party government era spanning from 1964 to 1994 had very strict policies primarily aimed at controlling the quantitative output of graduates so that the ideal numbers produced were easily absorbed by industry as well as quality concerns (Mtumbuka, 2010). As far as quality concerns are concerned parallels could be made of such restrictions in many other areas such as general trade, housing and the transport sector. The Catholic Church, for instance, intended to establish a university as far back as 1964 but it was not possible for this cited reason (Mtumbuka - Personal communication, 11th August, 2010). Between 2003 and 2008, enrolments of students consistently and significantly rose. For example in 2008 public higher education institutions enrolled (total student population) slightly over 8,000 students while private universities enrolled (total student population) 1,001 students. It should be noted that even though the participation rate of 0.4% is low for Malawi the enrolment growth has been significant as illustrated by the six year period data in Figure 1.2 below. Invariably, the recent growth linked to developments talked about in this section is related to the rate of growth of enrolments (see figure below) as opposed to the absolute size of enrolments and proportion of the (18 to 24 year olds) admitted in higher education (Trow, 1973:2).

Figure 1.2: Six year growth rate and absolute size of HE enrolments in Malawi: 2003-2008



Source: World Bank (2008)

The main source of financing for public universities is subvention from government for both capital and recurrent expenditures. Government subvention to higher education comprises 14.7% (2008) of the total education budget. The level of subvention varies by institution and is related to the enrolment in the institution. In recent years, public universities receive about 50% of what they request from Government and have to augment this with tuition fees and other income. The other source of financing for public universities is tuition fees paid by the students, and the fees structure is determined by each university. The regular (government subsidised) students at the University of Malawi pay a combined tuition and accommodation fee of MK25, 000 (163.93 USD) per year while those at Mzuzu University pay a tuition fee of MK28, 000 (183.61 USD) per year. The fees for both categories are however much lower than the unit cost for university education in Malawi (World Bank, 2008). The level of subventions in public universities also varies by institution, and is related to the enrolment of the institution. For instance, Chancellor College and the Polytechnic which have higher enrolments receive higher allocations than College of Medicine and Kamuzu College of Nursing. Subvention from government to the public institutions has been increasing with the number of students enrolled but the allocations are not adequate to meet the requirements of

the institutions let alone increase teaching and learning facilities that could facilitate increase of enrolments – also refer to Table 4.4 in Chapter 4 (World Bank, 2009).

1.3 Statement of the problem

In this study, I attempt to assess the link between participation rates, access policies and the governance of access in view of the 0.4% higher education participation rate in Malawi. The two public universities and private universities are not able to absorb the majority of secondary school graduates in Malawi. For instance out of the 7,263 secondary school leavers who qualified for university admission in 2008, only 2,386 made it to the first year of higher education institutions (public and private universities).

The 0.4% participation rate connotes very low levels of access to higher education in view of the proven benefits of higher education to the cause of sustained national economic development (Mora & Vila, 2003; World Bank, 2008; World Bank, 2000). The university enrolment rate of 0.4% is negligible when compared to the growth of the secondary school sector represented by a gross enrolment rate of 29%¹ (Mtegha, 2005; World Bank, 2008) and yet the government of Malawi has regularly acknowledged the function of tertiary education in national socio-economic development (Nur-Awaleh & Mtegha, 2005; Mtegha, 2005; National Economic Council (NEC), 1998).

For one to achieve a succinct examination of a system with low participation rates, such as the one obtainable in the system under study, there is need to study various variables of governance. The complexity regarding governance of access needs to be studied as well as influences driving higher education policies. Such research will help to understand systems with low participation rates.

Higher education policy making, the translation (implementation) of policy and enrolments as well as funding mechanisms among other complex factors in governing access all play a role in understanding participation rate outcomes and any other challenges in the expansion of the system. As Weber (2005) suggests, mere description of the challenges facing African higher education access systems does not help but rather an explanation of the challenges in question in line with access, finance and management issues facing African higher education institutions should be carried out.

¹ GER is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education (UNESCO, 2008).

It is along the same understanding as described above that the study investigated the key research question below:

- ***Is there a relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education access in Malawi?***

In order to answer the overall research question the study sought to answer the following research sub-questions;

- a. How can access policies and their outcomes in Malawi be conceptualised and explained (1984 to 2008)?*
- b. How do government and public universities in Malawi govern and plan for enrolments within the framework of state–university linkages?*
- c. What effects do policy actors have on higher education access and what is their role in access policy change in Malawi?*

1.4 Rationale and significance for the study

As pointed out by Tapper, “it has become a universal phenomenon that the development of mass higher education systems is associated with liberal democratic political systems” (Tapper *et al*, 2005). Researchers reviewing higher education access reforms consistently investigate the enrolment issue within the context of the existing political environment in terms of the way access or enrolments are governed (Bunting *et al*, 2005; Tapper *et al*, 2005; Maharasoa, 2003). Such views dominate because access has always been a critical policy or governance issue because of its profound significance for the general character of higher education (Trow, 1973; Jhingyi, 2004; Tapper, 2005).

This study is an attempt to examine the governance of a system with a low participation rate. The aim of conducting such an investigation is to help locate challenges surrounding systems with low participation rates such as the one under study. A large body of theory and empirical research has already been devoted to identifying the dimensions of systems with low participation rates (World Bank, 2008; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2005; Maharasoa, 2003; Teffera & Altbach, 2003).

The issue of how leaders in the higher education system perceive access continues to be muddled and most of all ignored because more often research around the topic has been

descriptive rather of the outcomes or challenges (Teffera & Altbach, 2003; Weber, 2005). Furthermore there is sparse information on how leaders have influenced governance of higher education enrolments in Africa. This research is thus significant in that it attempts to qualify the role of policy and enrolment governance in systems with low participation rates. For the purposes of this study, the concept of higher education leaders or policy actors is defined to imply leaders directly involved in policy making, change and implementation. Hence, the assertion that access should not only be understood on the basis of the participation rates but also on the understanding of accessibility in line with access policies including the governance of systems with particular enrolments.

It is interesting not only to examine the governance of higher education in relation to enrolments but also the effects that overarching policies and governance have on the sustained development of a country's economy.

Thus, governments that have made massive investments in higher education access have topped the knowledge index² economy in the world, for example Denmark, Sweden and Finland while South Africa, Mauritius and Namibia top the African continent knowledge index rank. On the other hand, countries with low participation rates such as Malawi, Sudan and Zambia have the lowest knowledge index rating in Africa.

The access issue is a topical subject in Malawi while the implications of systems with limited access are a crucial concern in sub-Saharan Africa. The 2000 World Bank Report 'Higher Education in Developing Countries' states that economies with higher enrolment rates and increased years of schooling appear to be more dynamic, competitive in global markets and successful in terms of higher income per capita. This study could add impetus to the movement to both increase and improve access in systems with low participation rates. The formulators of access policies in government departments and universities, who are responsible for overseeing the development of higher education access, are in need of field-tested research outcomes to implement in their work stations. Based on the findings, governments and universities could recommend an access improvement programme and provide guidelines for access policy implementation.

² The use of knowledge to produce economic benefits (also refers to the manner in which various high income businesses, educational and research institutions contribute to the economy of the country (World Bank, 2008).

This study could be a significant endeavour in promoting access governance in elite systems of higher education. The recommendations provided may serve as a future reference for researchers on the subject of the governance of higher education access. Furthermore, the findings of this study could enable development of other types of research related to the governance of access such as comparisons between country higher education governance systems and their respective effects.

Experiences and lessons obtained from the study could be of great value to policy makers in countries that bear a resemblance to Malawi as well as for the future development of Malawi's higher education system, including studies on the governance of access in systems with low participation rates.

Internationally, the theme of higher education access keeps on gaining in importance because in the 21st century the role of education in general and of higher education in particular is now more influential than ever in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic societies (World Bank, 2000; Jingyi, 2004). This study is also significant in that it enhances the understanding of systems with low participation rates, particularly since sub-Saharan African higher education systems' enrolments lag behind the rest of the world.

1.5 Scope and delimitation of the study

In Malawi, the history of organised post-secondary education dates back to 1895. In order to have a focus, this study is limited within the scope of post-independence higher education beginning 1984 when the first post independence higher education plan was developed.

This study focuses on the relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of access. Policy analysis forms an essential part of the study. Although this study touches on issues related to higher education access, policy and governance, it is important to note that it does not elaborate on all topical aspects of those three study concepts. Other related issues such as curricula, quality, inefficiencies and various forms of post-secondary education, policy making and processes will inevitably be touched upon but will not be discussed in detail. Other delimitations of the study include the following:

Policy managers within the Ministry of Education and University of Malawi formed the majority of those interviewed in this research. Policy managers from the second public university were excluded. The data collection period lasted from October, 2009 to March, 2010. This placed a limit on the overall timeline of the study from the point of view of

experiences and observations of interviewed participants. Research on higher education access in Malawi is relatively new and this impacted on the amount of information that was available to the researcher. For instance data that proved scarce was in regard to the influences and the actual contribution of supranational bodies such as the World Bank to the development of higher education policies vis-à-vis the paradigm shift - from free higher education to cost sharing in Malawi.

1.6 Definition of key terms

For the purposes of this thesis, the following concepts are defined in the following manner:

- (i) The term **access governance** is used as a phrase to refer to any strategy, tactic, process, procedure or programme for controlling, regulating, shaping, mastering or exercising authority over enrolments (Sparks, 2010).
- (ii) **Policy actors** in this study refer to the group of personnel both in university management and at the governmental level involved in higher education policy formulation, as well as policy implementation and change (Tantivess & Walt, 2008).
- (iii) **Ideology** is the body of ideas reflecting the orientation that characterises the thinking of government and the people in control of higher education (Girard & Grenier, 2008).
- (iv) **Gross participation rate** is the total enrolment in higher education divided by a reference group (the population within a certain fixed range of age) while **net participation rate** is enrolment at a specific age divided by population of that age group (Huisman *et al*, 2000).

1.7 Dissertation outline

The dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Following the *introductory* chapter, which outlines the nature of the study, Chapter Two presents a *review* of the related literature dealing with access, education policy and governance of access. The focus is on developing a governance of access framework and the last part of Chapter Two is devoted to defining it, outlining its theoretical precepts and discussing its implementation.

Chapter Three delineates and explains the selected *methodology* for the dissertation. The *presentation of the research results* is in Chapter Four and Chapter Five contains the *discussion, summary of results* and a set of *recommendations*.



CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a broad presentation of the literature on higher education access in Africa and on a global level including literature on the relationship between higher education participation rates, access policies and the governance of access. It will be followed by literature related to access issues in Malawi specifically. The topics addressed include the emergence of private universities in Africa and other trends such as cost sharing, emergence of dual-track enrolment programmes (parallel programmes) and governance of enrolments. The final thematic area under discussion is the theoretical framework.

2.2 Higher education access

The challenge of access to higher education has been a policy area of concern worldwide. Despite many policy initiatives in many countries, broader post-secondary participation has not benefited all sectors of society equally. Research findings after a study of 15 countries indicate that despite improved inclusion policies, the haves have benefited more and are at an advantage in most countries (Altbach *et al.*, 2009). Place of residence, unequal distribution of wealth and resources all contribute to disadvantage certain population groups. Participation has tended to be below national average for populations living in remote or rural areas as well as for indigenous groups (Altbach *et al.*, 2009).

In an Australian study, Gray, Hunter and Schwab (2000) in Biddle (2006) found, using a cohort analysis of the 1986, 1991 and 1996 census data, that non-indigenous youth had a higher participation rate than indigenous youth in higher education. Although the United States of America (USA) is no longer ranks first in the world in terms of providing access, its participation rates are still near the top of the list for all industrialised countries (Hauptman, 2007). Yet several reports in the USA indicate that while participation rates have increased there are continued disparities and a lag of outcomes for minority students such as Hispanic and black students as compared to white college students (Cejda & Short, 2008; Altbach *et al.*, 2009). In 2009 the percentage of Hispanic students was 12% while the percentage of black students rose to 14% compared to a 62% composition of white students (NCES, 2010). Although college enrolment rates have improved for the majority or nearly all income groups over the past three decades, advancement towards closing the opportunity gap for low- and moderate-income families remains elusive. These gaps and the lag in college participation

rates among income groups are as great now as they were in the 1970s and appear to be widening (Fitzgerald, 2004).

According to Hatt *et al*, 2008 participation in higher education in England remains sharply divided by social class. Despite over a century of universal education, differential rates of attainment by social class remain the norm in compulsory education and the same trend transitions into the social class gap in higher education. In Scotland, on the other hand, the higher education level provision has resulted in a significant increase in the level of participation during the 1990s and early years of the 2000s for low- and moderate-income families. The participation rate stood at 27.9 per cent in 1990-1991 but had increased to 51.5 per cent by 2000-2001. It is a well known point that despite expansion in higher education provision and higher levels of participation in Scotland, relative inequalities still abound (Gallacher, 2006).

There is an under-representation of students from the lower socio-economic groups in higher education (Walker *et al*, 2004). Ball *et al* (2002) and Walker *et al*, 2004 further point out that various studies confirm that the overall dominance of the more privileged classes persist today. Specifically, the student body consists of a higher proportion of students from professional and managerial families than unskilled ones (Gorard, 2005). Other universal challenges include the loss of income by young people, especially those from the working classes and lower socio-economic groups, who attend university instead of entering the income market.

Ironically, improved access to higher education does not necessarily guarantee improved career opportunities or access to the labour market (Watts & Bridges, 2006). Furthermore, global calls to widen higher education access are hampered by a section of the population of school leavers who make different life choices and do not pursue higher education (Watts & Bridges, 2006). Despite the inevitable shortcomings, various countries have instituted mechanisms or governance structures in order to ensure high access levels. For instance, in Poland, in the decade before 1989, there was a centralised structure for determining admissions which resulted in the Polish higher education structure increasing fourfold. In the post-1990 era it was a different political regime which was instituted. This era was associated with formulation of enabling policies which recognised that the higher education system helped to create an enhanced political, economic and social environment in any given

country; such that an increase in higher education was one of the core policies of the post-1989 government. The result of these strategy was that the percentage of young people in the 19-24 age group in higher education increased from 13.1% in the academic year 1990/91 to 43.7% in 2001/02 (McManus-Czubinska, 2005).

Participation in British higher education attained its mass levels as a result of the surge in growth that occurred between 1988 and early 1990s, when the participation rate for young people stood at 15% in 1988, doubled in 1994 and reached 35% by 2005 (Parry, 2005). These reforms were as a result of policies of consolidation and renewed expansion within the British system (Parry, 2005). Access to the Italian higher education system grew as a result of a mixture of factors such as the new Law No. 910 of 11 December 1969, which spearheaded urgent measures for university reform, an increase in the number of institutions and the increase of per capita income. As a result of these reforms the number of students enrolled expanded from 270,000 in 1960/61 to 1,700,000 in 2001/02 (Michelotti, 2005).

Access to higher education faces challenges the world over and the exposure of those challenges brings out trends that are particular to specific regions. All the studies mentioned that covered access to higher education on the global scale mentioned disparities of access between groups of people, along racial lines and socio-economic status. It appears that exposing these challenges increases the understanding of global higher education participation and that closer analysis of these trends provides a better understanding of possible strategies put in place by policy makers. With all of its diversity, the African continent has characteristic higher education access trends as described in the following section.

2.3 Higher education access in sub-Saharan Africa

Most colonial universities in Africa were established around 1950 (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Ever since then the number of higher education institutions has grown rapidly. At the end of the 1960s the sub-Saharan African higher education sector was in its youthful stage, today it is estimated that over 300 universities are in operation. With very few exceptions (mainly some of the smaller Portuguese speaking countries) every sub-Saharan African country has at least one university (Beverwijk, 2005).

Another body of scholarship confirms that not only have the number of universities increased but also the diversity in types of institutions. Over the last couple of decades new types of

institutions have been established such as private higher education institutions, polytechnics and colleges at a rapid rate. In 2001 for example, Nigeria had over 200 higher education institutions, whilst Uganda had 22 and Angola had six (Jabril, 2003; Carvalho *et al*, 2003; Beverwijk, 2005).

There is a fair amount of writing that discusses access and related issues (Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Cejda & Short, 2008; Gallacher, 2006). Problems arise when reviewing this writing: the emphasis is on description at the expense of explanation. This study seeks to add impetus to that conversation by analysing the access challenges in line with governance issues. During the last two decades, the higher education sector in sub-Saharan Africa has also seen a rapid growth in student numbers. Enrolments grew by an average of around 20% per year (Banya & Elu, 2001). In related studies, Munavu & Kithuka (2007) focus on enrolments and conclude that despite this rapid increase sub-Saharan Africa still has the most underdeveloped higher education systems compared to other regions of the world.

Higher education participation rates for different countries within the sub-Saharan African region vary as reflected in Table 2.2, found in the second part of the Chapter. The proportion of sub-Saharan African school leavers accessing university education currently stands at 5% while in OECD countries it is above 30%. In 1993 the enrolment ratio of the 18-23 age group was 2.4% against 18% in Latin America, 13.2% in the Arab States, 8.2% in South East Asia and 51% in developed countries (Shabani, 1998; Beverwijk, 2005). In terms of gender the gross enrolment ratio at the tertiary level was only 5% for males and 2% for females in the region (World Bank, 2000b; Oketch, 2003).

Yet educational and economic data put forward suggests that in the present world economy, a country cannot develop without substantial numbers of university-trained professionals. Higher education remains critical to any nation that aspires to lay a foundation for socio-economic development (Oketch, 2003). No educational factor correlates as strongly with national income as does university enrolment and also “higher education is recognised as a key force for modernization and development” (Tefferra & Altbach, 2004:21).

In view of the growing consciousness of the importance and contribution of higher education participation to economic growth, African governments in the 1960s and 1970s were proponents of a tuition-free university education (Oketch, 2003). This subsidy came in the form of central government financing tuition-free public universities to be enjoyed by all

students regardless of economic background and this subsidy often included free board and lodging. The free higher education policies were developed in a context of African countries exposed to fragile economies and tentative democracies that were struggling to maintain higher educational quality amid conditions of financial austerity and a relentlessly increasing student tide of demand. Johnstone (2004) and Oketch (2003) claim that free tuition policies, apart from not targeting the needy, did not expand access. Johnstone (2004) contends that during the 1990s some governments in Anglophone African countries, with the assistance of agencies such as the World Bank, began to review its position and realised that the ability of government to fund higher education at previous levels was limited. The reality was that governments could no longer plan and adequately fund the operations of higher education and that there were serious costs and repercussions to maintaining a policy of free tuition. After the realisation, most Anglophone African governments began to introduce cost-sharing mechanisms and programmes; these are also discussed later under *parallel programmes* (Johnstone, 2004; Oketch, 2003).

Cost sharing encompasses the introduction of tuition fees, which have become increasingly accepted as necessary for increased access and as a way to redress underfunding (Oketch, 2003). Cost sharing would thereby shift some of the costs of higher education from governments or taxpayers to an arrangement in which these costs are shared by parents (or extended families) and students (Johnstone, 2004). There are alternative ways the cost sharing model is being implemented apart from upfront payment of fees by students. Some East African countries – Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia have adopted the cost sharing model in the form of the *dual track* tuition fee policy (Johnstone, 2004). Public universities in these countries have opened their doors to students whose examination scores fall below the cut-off point for highly selective free (over subsidised) slots but meet minimum admission requirements and whose parents can pay. What this means is that sub-Saharan African countries can introduce tuition fees while nominally maintaining the principle of free-tuition at least for the small number of secondary school graduates who receive one of the free, government sponsored slots.

An aggressive dual track tuition policy and the most striking example of institutional cost-sharing in sub-Saharan Africa is at Uganda's Makerere University (Johnstone, 2004, see also Mamdani, 2007). Other than the dual track tuition programmes, student loans are believed to be a form of cost sharing by increasing access to higher education, making the wealthier

contribute to university budget, increasing the seriousness of students towards their study and providing a fair means of expanding higher education (Oketch, 2003). Criticisms against these forms of cost sharing are many, for instance that they are inequitable following the belief that children of the advantaged are the ones that attend university on tax-payers' expense. Further, in the case of student loans, many student loan schemes have a very high rate of non-payment except in countries such as Ghana where loaned money is collected through tax (Oketch, 2003).

In summary, higher education policies in more and more sub-Saharan African countries are on a slow trajectory toward sharing more of higher education costs with parents and students (Johnstone, 2003), notwithstanding the various forms of related weaknesses.

Most African universities have deteriorating facilities; countries such as Botswana and South Africa are exceptions to this trend (Samoff & Bidemi, 2004). The reasons for the deterioration are numerous including overcrowded university campuses, inadequate recurrent budget allocations in part due to slow or declining economic growth, and underfunding of higher education in favour of basic education (Sawyer, 2004; Samoff & Bidemi, 2004). Although African universities have witnessed a significant increase in enrolment during the two decades of the 1980s and 1990s, this growth is impeded by the limits to campus infrastructure designed and built for limited student numbers in the 1960s and 1970s. The result is that African higher education enrolments are still the lowest in the world. Moreover, the relatively large student populations in Nigeria and South Africa skew the regional statistics, suggesting growth has perhaps not been witnessed in many other African countries (Kapur & Crowley, 2008).

Higher education access development followed a similar pattern in most African countries, for instance establishment of universities occurred around the same period as well as developing in the context of a turbulent economic environment and political interference. Most authors sampled in the review highlighted that most African universities were founded in the 1960s, with some notable exceptions. Other studies note that this advent was associated with limited enrolments, free tuition policies and political interference. Taken as a whole, it seems that their beginnings highlight the milestones and challenges that African universities have experienced. Caution must be taken though as Sawyerr (2004) and Beverwijk (2005) emphasise, African higher education must not be treated as if it is a homogeneous sector. The

continent is diverse and there are both regional similarities and differences from Lusophone Africa to Anglophone countries. Irrespective of these similarities and differences, there are some dominant access policies which have been applied within countries intended to counteract the access challenges.

2.4 Dominant access policies

Access policies are widely considered to be a fundamental principle for enabling higher education access. Most countries have access policies which dominate and are relevant to the specific society in which they are formulated and applied. Such policies are implemented to support vulnerable and underserved communities and groups within the society in question. In each of the policies specified below, the key idea is to enhance access for the vulnerable groups so that higher education access is enhanced equitably along race, gender, socio-economic status lines etc.

Affirmative action or corrective action is a common action implemented as a redistributive measure in many societies, intended to remedy persistent inequalities, redress imbalances whether they are based on race, gender or socio-economic status that are the legacy of historical injustices (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002; Searle, 2003).

Searle (2003) reports that the higher education institutions in the USA have been grappling with their admission policies in relation to equal opportunity and race. In an admissions court case between the regents of the University of California and Allan Bakke, the court decided to reject quotas and instead allowed race to be one of the factors considered in college admissions to meet the compelling interest of diversity. Quotas were thus rejected as discriminatory against non-minority applicants, allowed for the lawful consideration of race and ethnic origin in university admissions but left the frameworks for achieving this unclear (Searle, 2003). In South Africa, creating alternative avenues for higher education for learners from disadvantaged educational contexts is one of several official redress objectives in order for higher learning institutions to rectify apartheid era injustices (Barnes, 2005; Waetjen, 2006). In this regard the South African government introduced a policy to increase enrolments of black students (Cloete, 2009). The 1997 White Paper considered government funding to be one of the key mechanisms for ensuring that the higher education system moves towards targeted transformational goals. This meant that higher education funding should support changes in institutional student and staff compositions in terms of race and gender (Stumpf, 2004).

Waetjen (2006), however, reports that the language of redress is strikingly vague both in its identification of eligible beneficiaries and in its strategic objectives. She maintains that phrases like demographic representation and social transformation are generally regarded as euphemisms for racial categories, quotas and counts. Yet their indirectness allows for alternative interpretations. The vision of the South African government for access and the higher education sector is to encourage equity of access and fair chances of success and progress to all those seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while removing all forms of unfair discrimination and the advancement and redress for past inequalities (Griesel, 2000).

In the United Kingdom (UK) the current policy drive, which has commanded the most attention, encourages participation by lower socio-economic groups in higher education. Social class participation alongside gender, ethnicity, and mature student participation has dominated the access debate in the UK (Searle, 2003). These debates arise following the trend that in that country's higher education system working class participation has not increased as rapidly as middle class participation. Furthermore, the UK government has introduced initiatives such as the AimHigher project that aims to promote improved access to higher education from previously under-represented groups, i.e. participation by lower socio-economic groups or non-traditional students (Searle, 2003; Tapper, 2005; Sauto-Otero & Whitworth, 2006). This includes a pledge to increase participation in higher education towards 50% of those aged 18-30 by 2010 (DfES, 2003; Tapper, 2005). In a bid to enhance gender equity in admission to Kenyan public universities, in the last few years the Joint Admissions Board has been admitting women who have one or two points lower than the men. This has expanded the number of government subsidised female students in the public universities (Irina, 2001).

The Portuguese government initiated three policy standpoints which guided government during the period 1976 to 1986. These were firstly to expand and diversify the system by implementing a binary system (of universities and polytechnics) and allowing the emergence of the private sub-sector; secondly, to increase the institutional autonomy of the public sector, in particular universities; and lastly to regulate the size of the higher education system through appropriate access policies (Magalhaes, 2006).

The French government set two targets for the French national education system: first that every school leaver would be provided with recognised professional qualifications by the year 2000. Second, that 80% of an age cohort would reach baccalaureate level. The two admission goals became legal national requirements by 1989 (Journal Officiel, 1989; Deer, 2005). In Germany, the Lander passed the so-called Offnungsbeschluss in 1977, the decision to keep university access open to anyone with relevant qualifications but without equivalent funding for the institutions. In effect this implied that for almost a decade universities were expected to operate above capacity (Arbeitsgruppe Bildungsbericht, 1994; Ostermann, 2005). As a result of this policy, the relative ease of access to higher education through the constitutional entitlement to a university place has encouraged large numbers of A-level students to choose studying for a degree, including those who may not necessarily be intellectually able enough or those who are still uncertain as to what career path to opt for (Ostermann, 2005).

Kaiser and Vossensteyn (2005) say that open access policy, combined with policies designed purposefully to widen access, will play a role in the expansion of a system. This proposition agrees with the finding by Chigawa (2010) who states that the Government of Malawi should not place unnecessary barriers or limitations upon those that are capable of benefiting from the country's education system. It was thus the intention of the researcher to establish the effect of access policies and the governance of higher education.

It is important to note how scholars have approached and considered the relationship access policies to participation rates and the governance of higher education as illustrated by the section below.

2.5 Relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education

Admission or access policies aim at regulating enrolment, in terms of the qualifications required, the capacity of institutions and fulfilling the needs of the labour market. Government policy among other factors is a force that have been reported to have an impact on participation rates (Huisman *et al*, 2000). Kaiser and Vossensteyn (2005) maintain that access policies aim at influencing the number of people who enter higher education or the composition of those who enter higher education. Other factors largely unrelated to governmental policies such as the incorporation of new scientific fields and increasing consumer benefits maybe of equal importance (Huisman *et al*, 2000). Huisman and others

continue to state that it is clear from most policies that irrespective of the systems concerned there is a set of common assumptions underlying these policies. The assumptions express the general beliefs that the rate of participation can be positively influenced through increasing the affordability of attending higher education either by reducing the costs or by increasing the benefits and through making admission to higher education less selective.

Conlon (2006) suggests that without strategic policy interventions from the government the social divide when it comes to access to post-secondary education is likely to get worse. Additionally Arcidiacono (2005) in Epple *et al* (2008) stated that removing advantages for minorities in admission policies substantially decreases the number of minority students at top-tier schools. Young and Johnson (2004) in a study of the impact of an SES (social economic status) –based model on college admissions outcomes found that admission policies based on socio-economic preferences can fulfil the promise of genuine equal opportunity and indirectly compensate for past discrimination.

Oketch (2009) posits that government policies also have a direct influence on demand and supply of private education. This manifests itself in a number of ways: prohibiting of private institutions by simply banning them, imposing strict regulations that may discourage those considering establishing non-profit institutions, encouraging the establishment of private institutions by enacting laws and regulations that encourage rather than discourage the development of private institutions, and subsidising fees of students in private institutions. Oketch (2009) speculates that increased spending on public schools by government increases both their quantity and/or quality and in turn decreases the demand for private education.

The UNESCO (2009) Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report maintains that education governance is an easily defined concept. It is something that affects the lives of parents, the school experience of children and the efficiency and equity of education provision. If the precise meaning of good governance can be debated the consequences of bad governance are readily observable. They include chronically underfinanced institutions, service providers and government agencies that are unresponsive to local needs and unaccountable to parents, as well as large disparities in access, participation and completion rates including low levels of learning achievement.

The report further posits that governance is a central concern and that the aim of good governance in education as in other areas is to strengthen accountability and give people a

voice in decisions that affect their lives so as to enable the delivery of good quality services. It also maintained that good governance is concerned with social justice and fairness. Effective national planning is the starting point for governance reform (UNESCO, 2009).

Ferlie *et al*, 2008 relate governance to steering the externally derived instruments and institutional arrangements which seek to govern organisational and academic behaviours within higher education institutions. The authors further state that the steering instruments usually but not always emanate from the state. Within this school of thought the state is attributed an important role in mediating the interest of the society and orienting the development of higher education. Although state intervention in higher education is expected to be limited there is suspicion around the performance of traditionally publicly funded service systems by publics, politicians and policy makers so that government may need to exercise its power in championing powerless consumers.

In this case the state may put pressure on publicly funded providers to meet broad public policy goals in order, for example, to ensure equity (Van der Meulen, 1998; Ferlie *et al*, 2008). With respect to this mission, the state is expected to set and defend broad principles (e.g. equality of access) and to intervene if threatened by the increase in market forces. In terms of policy and management implications for the higher education governance narrative the Ministry of Education and its higher education agencies adopt an indirect and shaping role: They support various actors as the ultimate guardian of the public interest.

In line with Weberian principles which reaffirm the role of the state as the main facilitator of solutions to new social and political problems, in the higher education system this implies that the state should continue to steer the higher education sector strongly as it is of strategic significance to society as a whole (Ferlie *et al*, 2008). In addition to command and control, self-regulatory and responsive regulatory forms, Gunningham *et al*, Braithwaite, Parker, Rees and others show in their various studies that other regulatory instruments are available to decision makers. These include voluntarism – in which organisations do the right thing, being coerced at least directly; and the use of secondary regulation such as media and performance publications in which underperformance or non-compliance is met by public naming and shaming and threats to corporate and leaders' reputations (King, 2007).

Another regulatory form of governance in higher education, as cited by Tollefson (2009), is the use of performance funding. In this study, Tollefson found out that the so-called drivers

of funding formulae were reported by 20 states in the USA to include enrolment in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas and Maryland. The States of California, New Mexico and Nevada reported that their formulae were based on a combination of enrolment and space utilisation while Arkansas, Massachusetts and Tennessee all reportedly based their funding formulae on a combination of enrolment, space utilisation and comparisons with peer institutions. Another typical steering mechanism is the South African higher education funding formula which from 1983 to 1984 was based on the South African Post Secondary Education formula which was driven both by inputs (student enrolments) and outputs (successful students and research publications). The higher education funding formula policy goals for 1994-2001 through the White Paper of 1997 embraced the principle of a goal directed funding approach that should yield more equitable student access, improved quality of teaching and research and increased student progression and graduation rates among others (Stumpf, 2001).

Coates *et al* (2004), in their study titled “More evidence that university administrators are utility maximising bureaucrats”, argue that public higher education is often subjected to state oversight boards and political control as is the case in the USA. The results of this study suggest that public oversight is as likely to raise as well as lower enrolment. Lowry (2001), cited in the same study, finds that tuition and fees are lower in the States where there is greater political control of the universities and where trustees are selected by non-academic stakeholders. In conclusion of the cited study it was suggested that in equilibrium an increased supply would induce lower tuition fees and would result in greater quantity of enrolments.

Ostermann (2005) who studied German higher education access concluded that the role of access policies in the expansion is hard to pinpoint. She stated that there was no clear evidence that linked access policies to changes in participation. She nevertheless summarised the findings in her study by reiterating that open access policy combined with policies designed purposefully to widen access will play a role in this regard, however modest.

A study in Nordic countries has in part explained expansion in higher education in the Nordic context originating from government’s decision to expand the higher education system in response to societal needs. An additional explanation is the political objective of enhancing equality of educational opportunity regardless of gender, social class, ethnic and regional

background (Aamodt & Kyvik, 2005). However, in reality, the relations between societal needs, demands and political decisions are far more complex than the explanations that this study will tackle, and they also vary between countries.

There has nevertheless been a significant gap in the literature with respect to accessibility of non-university, post-secondary higher education institutions. Teferra & Altbach (2004) confirm this as they argue that the contribution of the post-secondary education is underestimated. The authors go on to illustrate Zambia as a typical example because it has only two universities but it also has 50 or so colleges for “further education” (Teferra & Altbach, 2004:22). Additionally elsewhere in Africa, in South Africa for instance, expanding further education and training is seen as a way to open access to post-school education, raise student numbers, plug a skills gap and improve diversity in the tertiary system (Macgregor & Maslen, 2008).

Cloete (2009) tries to highlight some of the facts believed to be the cause for this underestimation of the further education and training sector. The analysis is in the South African context but can arguably be applicable to the sub-Saharan context. He argues that there is hardly any higher education and further education and training (FET) interaction. South Africa, according to Cloete (2009), has never had an integrated post-secondary education system which supports strengthened and planned interaction and linkages between institutions such as universities, FET colleges, agricultural colleges, nursing colleges and teacher education colleges.

Cloete (2009) continues to support the argument that to change participation rates requires a massive expansion of the post-school system. There are two options proposed, either university enrolments are doubled or a differentiated post-school system is established with universities, colleges (public and private) and a range of other post-school education and training opportunities.

The literature reviewed this far supports the premise that there is a relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education. What is under contestation though is the extent of the relationships – direct or indirect, for instance whether access policies are an important determinant for participation rates (Huisman *et al*, 2000) while governance has been linked to participation rates (UNESCO, 2009). Despite the several attempts to relate participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education,

none of them have related all these three variables in one study. This study was thus carried out to contribute to the knowledge gap that existed.

2.6 Strengthening of access in African higher education

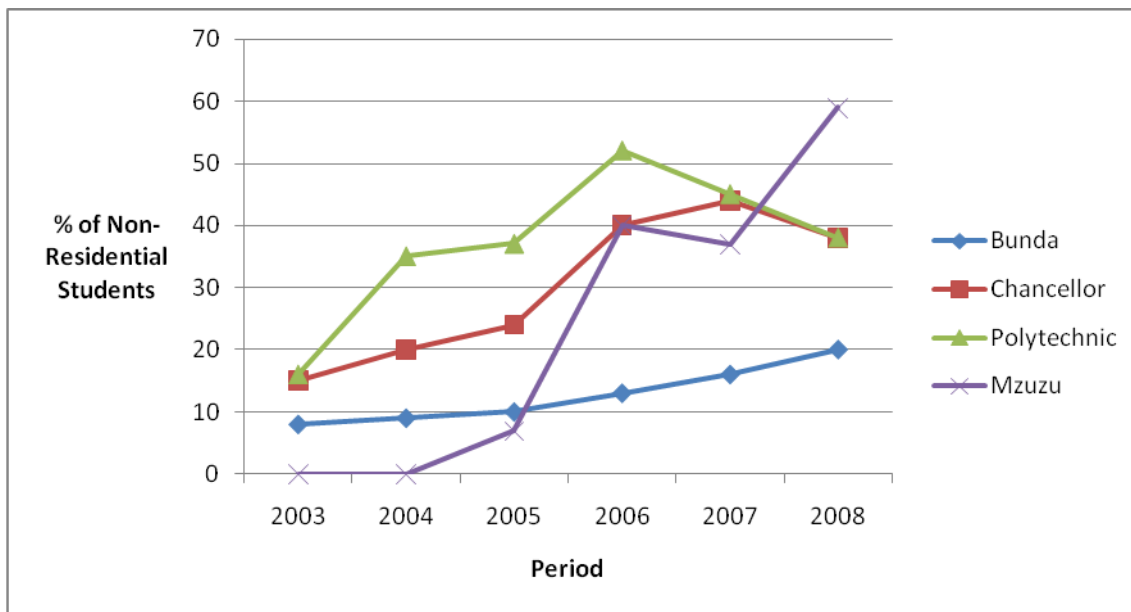
2.6.1 Emergence of parallel programmes in Africa

Parallel programmes refer to the separate group of students who pay full tuition to universities and are admitted alongside students who are admitted under government sponsorship (Kiamba, 2004). Otieno (2007) profiles this recent feature in African higher education, i.e. the emergence of full fee paying programmes otherwise known as module II or parallel programmes. These students take their lectures separately in the evening and weekends or combined with regular students (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2004). In addition this category of students does not normally receive accommodation offered by the universities.

The admission of private fee paying students was piloted by Makerere University in Uganda in 1992 (Wangenge-Ouma, 2007). The World Bank's conviction and analysis was that the admission of these students would democratise higher education while the leadership of Makerere University was encouraged to introduce the programme as a way detach from total dependence on government funding (Mamdani, 2007). The University of Nairobi in Kenya followed in 1998 when it adopted the concept of the entrepreneurial university and later, the University of Malawi in 2002.

Parallel programmes were implemented in many other African countries in the context of a decline in state revenues and the shrinking of public expenditure to higher education. This state of affairs resulted in the universities shifting their resource dependence from the state to the market. This change, often termed as cost sharing, entails shifting some of the burden of higher education costs from the government (or tax payers) to parents and/or students. In view of the shift universities operate as a business and espouse a business-like orientation since the parallel programme is established with the primary purpose of raising income (Kiamba, 2004; Mamdani, 2007; Wangenge-Ouma, 2008).

Figure 2.1: Percentage of non-residential (parallel) students in publicly funded HEI in Malawi: 2003-2008



Source: World Bank (2008)

In Malawi enrolments in public institutions have for many years been limited by the bed space as required by the University of Malawi Act and policies. Bed space had also not increased significantly overtime due to lack of funding which prevented expansion. Therefore the increase in enrolment at University of Malawi colleges and Mzuzu University can be attributed to the enrolment of non-residential students (sometimes referred to as ‘parallel’ students) (World Bank, 2008). The impact of non-residential students on enrolments has been quite significant. This applies to particularly two of the University of Malawi Constituent Colleges namely Chancellor College and the Polytechnic including another public institution, Mzuzu University. For instance the percentage of non-residential students comprised 51.9% of the total enrolment at the Polytechnic in 2006 and 57.7% at Mzuzu University in 2008. The percentages of non-residential students have been increasing in all institutions that enrol such students as shown in Figure 2.1. The enrolment of non-residential students has provided an economic option to the state for substantially increasing enrolments in public institutions.

According to Johnstone (2004) Makerere is famous for having an aggressive and financially-successful dual-track tuition policy with more than 75% of students paying fees. Public universities in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi are taking the lead in expanding access to higher education through the full fee paying programme. The significant advantage they offer over students admitted on government scholarships is a potential increase in cost recovered through full payment of fees. In the Kenyan case the

income from parallel programmes is used for institutional development and payment of academic and administrative staff (Marcucci *et al*, 2008).

Aside from the stated benefits of parallel programmes, critics say the programme waters down the quality of education (UWN, 2008). In addition, the policy of enrolling full fee-paying students raises issues of equity. It has often been thought that such policies block the participation of students from poor households and encourage the commercialisation of university education (Kinyanjui & Afeti, 2008). Similarly Marcucci *et al* (2008) argue that other than the increased institutional viability and expanded capacity the expansion of capacity is only for middle-income students and not for genuinely poor students.

Lewin (2009) gives a similar conclusion in his study on access to education in sub-Saharan Africa. He identifies the issue of marginalisation of poor students as a challenge in many African higher education systems since wealth remains the most powerful determinant of progression to higher education levels (Lewin, 2009). The study suggests therefore that African countries face similar challenges that require concerted efforts to solve.

Combined with the findings that most beneficiaries of higher education are students from middle- and higher-income backgrounds is the thorny issue of privatisation of higher education in Africa. This entails that parents and students should be made to share the cost of providing higher education. This position is a conflicting one since during the early years of establishing universities in Africa students paid no tuition fees and in a few cases where they paid, it was a token amount (Sawyer, undated).

Kinyanjui and Afeti (2008) suggest that in most countries in Africa there is a tendency to concentrate on the needs of those students who will proceed to academic and professional programmes. These scholars indicate further that yet the situation is that the majority of upper secondary leavers do not end up at university. The authors further posit that the slow expansion of the higher education systems in many African countries has limited their capacity to increase enrolments in tandem with demand. This in itself limits the chances of upper secondary school graduates to acquire higher education. The problem is compounded by inadequate differentiation and diversity of institutions and programmes at a higher education level leading to a reduced opportunity for selection and choice by prospective students.

Examinations play a critical role in mediating the process of transition between the various levels of the education system. Performance in the national examinations is the accepted system of allocation and admission to higher education institutions. In countries such as Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania and Uganda admission into higher education institutions is centralised under the auspices of a joint admissions board. Centralised admission systems allow for equitable and transparent allocation of the available opportunities in public universities in these countries. In Kenya, for instance, every year members of the board hold a number of meetings to determine the cut-off points for admission which vary from year to year (Mwiria *et al*, 2007).

2.6.2 *Growth of private universities in Africa*

This section will discuss the growth of private universities and private higher education developments which are part of the worldwide trend in privatisation.

Private higher education has a long history in Europe since the first European universities were privately run by associations and national higher education systems were only established in the 19th and 20th centuries (McCowan, 2004). In many countries particularly the USA, a dual system has existed for many years (McCowan, 2004). Most writings on the history of private higher education trace the emergence of the private higher education sector in developing countries only as far back as the 1990s (Alemu, 2010).

Kruss (2005) however argues that the emergence of private higher education can be traced back to an earlier period and she illustrates that the very origins of many higher education systems in Africa started with private initiatives. This is particularly evident in countries such as South Africa which had the South African College established as a private initiative of the elite in 1829. The college rapidly shifted its focus to provide university education and eventually became incorporated as the University of Cape Town in 1918 (Kruss, 2005). Perhaps what could be traced to the 1990s is the rapid growth of private higher education provision.

Ball (2009) underscores the impact of the private sector in that it does the work of the state in several respects in fulfilling both first order and second order interests – that is, the production of both profit and product. Kruss (2002) categorises the emergence of private higher education as responding to three types of demands: a more, better and different demand. A *more* demand is typically a demand which allows the existence of private higher

education because the private providers are able to absorb excess demand that public providers cannot satisfy. A response to *better* demand is where private institutions are seen to provide for an elite demand in the face of failure of public institutions to provide an internationally portable high status career-oriented education on an exclusive basis for the elite. While the response for a *different* demand arises when private providers take the form of small scale ‘specialised providers’ offering vocational and professional programmes that are not traditionally considered to be higher education (Kruss, 2002).

Similar to what Kruss analysed as ‘more, different and better demand’, Wei (2009) refers to two developmental patterns or formational mechanisms defined as *excess* demand and *differentiated* demand. The former referring to quantitative insufficiency of the supply of public education whereas the latter refers to the growth of private education resulting from the inability of the contents of public education to meet the special requirements of some groups of people in society. He further explains that in normal circumstances the developmental pattern of private higher education in the developing countries may be a response to the excess-demand type, whereas that in developed countries pertains to the differentiated-demand type (Wei, 2009).

Ironically “even though the number of private higher education has increased dramatically and appears higher in absolute numbers when compared to public institutions, student enrolment in public institutions outnumbers enrolment in private institutions in nearly all countries” Tefferra & Altbach (2004:33). This is illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Private higher education enrolment as percentage of total enrolment per region

	REGION	LEVEL/PERCENTAGE
1	East Asia	70%
2	Latin America	45%
3	South Asia	30%
4	Africa	25%
5	USA	20%
6	Central and Eastern Europe	20%
7	South East Asia	15%
8	Australia	3%
9	Western Europe	Marginal
10	Middle East	Just beginning to emerge

Source: American Council of Education (2010)

Private higher education, once a peculiar feature of specific countries, has expanded dramatically throughout the world in the past three decades. The former Soviet Bloc, China, South East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, India, Turkey and all of Latin America except for Cuba have seen market-driven private institutions emerge in great numbers to absorb increased demand for tertiary studies, provide a different service and choice or make profits (Bernasconi, 2005).

While political thinking favouring the application of market principles in higher education was a debatable issue in the 1980s it became an operational principal guiding developments in higher education in the 1990s in Africa (Varghese, 2006: 31). Although private agencies were active in school education in sub-Saharan Africa (Kitaev, 1999; Varghese, 2006) the legal framework for the operation of private sector higher education institutions did not exist in many African countries until the 1990s (Varghese, 2006). However Kenya was one of the few countries where private universities have a longer history and have co-existed with public universities. The lack of guiding legal frameworks was one of the constraints in the emergence of the private sector in higher education in the majority of African countries. The increasing social demand for higher education and the demand for a different type of education (James, 1991; Varghese, 2006) led to initiating policy measures encouraging the private sector in many countries where private higher education institutions were unheard of (Varghese, 2006).

By most accounts, private higher education is set to become the dominant institution type as less developed nations lack the capacity to maintain expansive public higher education sectors, such is the case of African higher education systems (Salerno, 2004). In many African countries private institutions outnumber the public universities and institutions (Varghese, 2006). This surge in the growth of private higher education in Africa is caused by the corresponding surge in demand for higher education (Levy, 2006; Ishengoma, 2007). There are numerous reasons for the emergence of private universities on a large scale (Varghese, 2006).

- First, the inability of the public sector to satisfy the growing social demand for higher education has necessitated the entry of the private sector in order to expand access conditions.
- Second, the changing political view of large scale public subsidies to social sectors will reduce investment possibilities in the productive sectors and hence the overall growth potential of the economy.
- Third, in many countries the demand for courses and subjects of study had changed and public universities were unable to respond to this phenomenon.
- Fourth, in countries where the public sector is criticized for its inefficiency, the private sector is increasingly promoted for its efficiency in operation.
- Fifth, in many centrally planned economies the transition from state planning to market forces was also associated with the expansion of the private sector in higher education (Varghese, 2006).

In most countries state financing and provision alone will not satisfy the growing demands for higher education and hence countries adopt more pro-competition policy instruments and increasingly look to the market/private sectors in running higher education (Mok, 2008). In such instances the government believes financing higher education by the state alone will never be sufficient and therefore there are initiatives to diversify financial sources and allow non-state sectors including overseas institutions to run higher education in order to meet pressing educational needs (Lee, 2004; Mok, 2008).

Progressive development related to African access therefore has been the development of private universities. Ng'ethe *et al* (2008) note the appearance and multiplication of private providers of university education which has become a common trend in most African countries. In many ways the rise of private higher education is related to the loosening governance of higher education access regulation by government. Governments have developed many strategies to increase or if necessary to control participation rates (Huisman *et al*, 2000). One of the ways which governments employ to increase participation rates is the encouraging of the establishment of private universities. In this regard some governments even invite 'world class' and reputable universities from abroad to set up their campuses within their countries as another approach. In Malaysia for instance, the government believes financing higher education by the state alone will never be sufficient therefore it began to diversify financial sources and allow non-state sectors (including the market and overseas institutions) to run higher education in order to meet pressing educational needs (Lee 2004; Mok, 2008).

“In addition the government in Malaysia has deliberately allowed the growth of private higher education to address the educational needs of those citizens from lower socio-economic backgrounds since they cannot afford to pay for studying overseas” (Mok, 2008: 158). Levy (2004) in Ishengoma (2007) makes important arguments about the reasons for the growth of private higher education worldwide which can also explain the causes of the growth of higher education in Africa. He argues that private higher education growth is connected to widespread changes in the political economy, changes which have reduced the role of the state in funding and controlling higher education in many African countries.

Along the same argument, Banya & Elu (2001) observe that the proliferation of profit-oriented higher education in sub-Saharan Africa is part of a larger, worldwide trend towards privatisation. Levy, citing Salamon (1995), further argues that the growth of private higher education or what he calls 'the new private surge' should be seen in a larger context of the shift from state to private or mixed private-public forms. This study will also trace any level of development/progress of the coexistence of public and private universities in policies through the lens of several empirical studies from Kenya by Mwiria *et al* (2007) and others which describe the institutionalisation of private-public universities partnerships. These linkages (private university - public university or private university - government) are

important to trace because of the sheer impact on expansion of enrolments, especially the significance of formalisation and institutionalisation of such linkages.

Another type is the cross-border provision that is gaining ground in sub-Saharan Africa related to the setting up of off-shore or satellite campuses by foreign providers that offer international qualifications, most of them in computer and business-related disciplines.

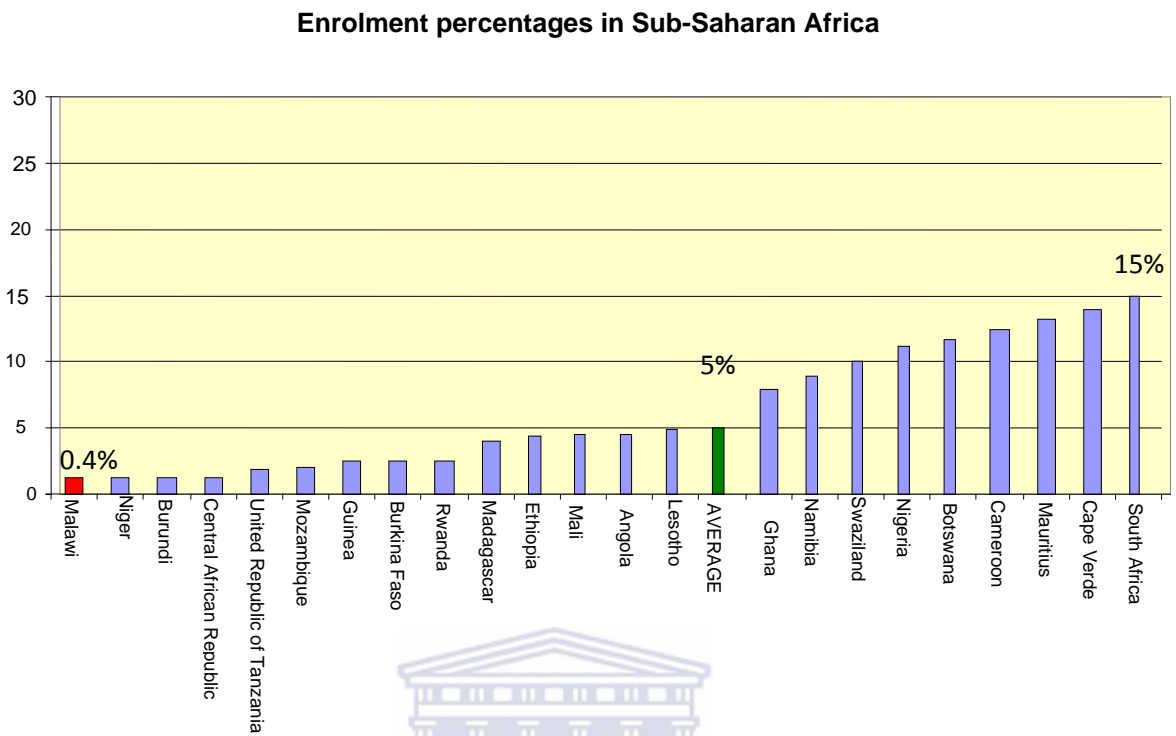
A new model of relationship between local and foreign private providers emerging in this regard is related to the franchising of qualifications from developed countries particularly between United Kingdom institutions and local private providers (Naidoo *et al*, 2007).

The introduction of parallel programmes and policies allowing the operation of private universities has helped advance higher education access. These two developments have come into being following the inability of public universities to respond immediately to demands from the general public for employment-related courses and general expansion in general. The section below covers the higher education access trends that prevail in Malawi.

2.7 Access to higher education in Malawi

University education in Malawi is still extremely competitive due to the very limited places offered to qualifying students each year. This is because the physical facilities at the public universities and the financial resources have not expanded to respond to the increasing population of eligible candidates for higher education (Chimombo, 2003). According to this author, tertiary education admits a very small proportion of the eligible school population. For instance in Malawi an average of 51 people per 100,000 inhabitants of the population are enrolled in degree programmes as compared to the sub-Saharan average of 337 people per 100,000 of the sub-Saharan African population. Figure 2.2 is a reflection of how Malawi is fairing in higher education enrolment terms within sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 2.2: Enrolment in degree programs: sub-Saharan Africa



Source: World Bank 2008



Higher education GER of selected countries in 2005

Table 2.2: Total enrolment as percentage of 20-24 age group

REGION/COUNTRY	% OF 20-24 AGE GROUP
Sub-Saharan Africa (average)	5
South Africa	15
Nigeria	10
Malawi	0.4
Uganda	3
Mauritius	17
Ghana	6
Ethiopia	3
Central African Republic	1.9
Burundi	1.0
United Republic of Tanzania	0.6
Namibia	6.6
Swaziland	4.9
Rwanda	0.9
Madagascar	2.3
Ethiopia	1.0
Mali	1.8
Angola	0.8
Lesotho	2.2
Botswana	3.1
Cameroon	5.1

Source: UNESCO (2006)

In Malawi, the majority of students are enrolled in public universities. According to a World Bank (2008) report the enrolment in public universities in 2008 for instance, was 8,081 while that for private universities was 988 comprising 12.3% of the total university enrolment. The limited growth of public higher education enrolments is a result of little capital investment over time resulting in institutions' inability to increase the space needed for the expansion in enrolments (World Bank, 2008). Female enrolment has remained small compared to males at approximately 30% of enrolments. The percentage of females in the private universities is however greater than that in public universities and is on average above 40% (World Bank, 2008).

University enrolment growth is negligible when compared to the growth of enrolment in the secondary sector represented by 29% (Mtegha, 2005). The higher education sector in Malawi is therefore under strenuous pressure from the demand exerted by a quickly growing secondary school sector. As a result the mainstream universities continue to adhere to a very rigorous selection system that depends on one's results from the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations (Chimombo, 2003) and university entrance examinations.

Chimombo (2003) asserts that another area of concern is the inequitable distribution of limited university positions between regions, districts, men and women, the rich and the poor, including rural and urban communities. There has however been an attempt to re-introduce a higher education admissions system that demands universities to enrol students according to district quotas rather than straight merit (UWN, 2010). Under the new system students are selected to universities based on the district of origin. The policy is aimed at discouraging a trend where students from the northern region access universities in greater numbers than students from the central and southern regions of the country.

This policy however faced a lot of conflict and pressures during formulation and implementation. Civil society organisations and the public at large feared that if the policy was not properly managed, it would lead to sectional or even tribal discord in the country. In spite of this apparent disagreement on the merits of the policy the government went ahead to have the quota system implemented, beginning with the 2009 university intake (Chigawa, 2010).

2.8 Summary

The importance of university level education has increased dramatically and in recent years the number of school leaving 18 to 24 year-olds qualified to access higher education has expanded. This growing importance of higher education and the limited nature of higher education capacity have resulted in recent programmes and trends such as parallel programmes and the development of branch campuses and/or joint degree programmes belonging to universities abroad. These developments have been captured in order to develop an understanding of current trends in African higher education.

This section of the **literature review** looked at the challenge of access globally and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular. A further review was conducted on the relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of higher education. As observed in

the main arguments of the literature reviewed, the responsibility of steering higher education access rests with the state. This role is harnessed through among other things formulating conducive access policies and good governance practices. This has been observed from the calls from UNESCO who have reiterated the important role of the state and good education governance (UNESCO, 2009).

Given the way the governance of access trends are presented, government playing the role of ultimate guardian on the one hand and coordinating function of policy on the other, it is hard not to conclude that governments should regard access as a primary tool to promote higher education. As a consequence, the state as both a policy coordinating body and funding institution is at an advantageous position to ensure that higher education institutions do not perpetuate inequalities of access.

Secondly, the point that comes out clearly from the concept of good governance in education is that it is related to notions of social justice and fairness, as suggested by UNESCO (2009) and authors such as Ferlie *et al* (2008).

A summary of the various studies looking at outcomes of access and the role of the state in governing higher education access thus present us with the following key points:

- (a) Universally, access to higher education has challenges irrespective of region;
- (b) There are characteristic challenges and trends associated with sub-Saharan Africa higher education systems, for instance insufficient supply of university places in public universities leading to the rapid growth of private universities; and
- (c) There is the introduction of an alternative cost sharing model such as the introduction of a dual track tuition programme targeting school leavers who do not qualify for a government subsidised university place.

2.9 Theoretical approaches to access, policy, governance literature

Conceptions, definitions and approaches relating to access, policy and governance of higher education access can be classified in various ways. Each classification has its own advantages and disadvantages and, therefore, each one is unique for its own purposes. With this in mind, an attempt is made to give an overview of various definitions and theoretical approaches relevant to the study of governance of higher education access. In this section what has been written about access, policy and governance of higher education is examined.

(A) Access, policy change and governance

The study has three primary points of focus in the understanding of access:

- (a) The notion of higher education accessibility;
- (b) Exposition of higher education access in policy documents; and
- (c) Outcomes of access in relation to governance of the higher education system.

This study will employ **three** basic ways of approaching the topic of higher education access. **One** is by regarding access as a mere definition, exemplified in the empirical contribution of Heller (2001). Heller provided a classical definition of accessibility used in American literature which includes components such as:

- *financial* accessibility to question whether the student has the necessary financial resources to attend college;
- *geographic* accessibility implying the distance a potential student has to travel to attend college;
- *programmatic* accessibility implying a condition whether the academic programme that the student wants is available; and
- *cultural/physical/social* accessibility connoting the support from peers, family, school and other social structures. This includes noting if the existing policies are prohibiting or encouraging enrolment of students from underprivileged or marginalised groups. For instance, are there barriers to attendance for the disabled?

The clarification of Heller's seminal work in this area is instructive. Heller (2001) underscores the importance of sequencing access from the experience and point of view of the student. This angle should be consistently incorporated into future studies of access. The task of establishing causal linkages between the outcomes of access and decisions made by students are made particularly clear given that the two variables can be reciprocal, that is, decisions by students can and do influence access outcomes.

A **second** approach is to view access as exposed in policy documents, illustrated by the work of Breneman (Heller, 2001). Breneman provided a historical notion of viewing access which

signals policy positions of giving students options, ranging from choice of institution to the opportunity of affording a particular type of institution by future students (Heller, 2001). In line with this approach, such exposure of access issues in policies can lead to awareness of challenges, and increased institutional support and regulation within a given higher education system.

A **third** approach is to view access as an instrument, which is moderated by those who govern access and how the higher education system responds, with various implications dependent on (and with implications to) the size of the system on the one hand and the structure, functions, standards of selection, academic standards and changing attitudes in society on the other hand (Trow, 1973).

This approach is elaborated in the work of Martin Trow (1973). Trow developed a framework; the elite–mass–universal framework to understand stages of the development of access patterns in higher education systems (Trow, 1973; Jhingyi, 2004). Trow used enrolment rates as an index to conceptualise and include the three phases of higher education development: 15% and below, as the *elite* stage; between 15% to 40% as the *mass* stage; 40% and above as the *universal* stage.

His further definition of mass higher education is concerned with the aspect that transition does not only involve the size of the expansion of the system but also several aspects including attitude towards higher education, its functions, its structure and standards of selection and academic standards (Trow, 1973; Jhingyi, 2004). The significance (meaning) of college attendance changes as more students from an age cohort move on to college and university each year; first from being a privilege to being a right then being close to an obligation; second, the functions of higher education change from the creation of a meritocratic society to preparing large numbers for technological take off (Trow, 1973; Jhingyi, 2004).

At the *elite* stage higher education is primarily concerned with shaping the mind and character of the ruling class. The institutions still prepare elites but the main concern is to prepare large numbers for life, and to maximise the adaptability of the population to a world whose primary characteristic is rapid social technological change (Trow 1973:7; Jhingyi, 2004).

At the *mass* stage, the structure of the system changes which requires not merely further expansion of the elite university system but growth of popular non-elite institutions (Trow 1973:6; Jhingyi, 2004). At the mass stage, the student body changes which entails diversity by including students from every social stratum and in turn requires changes in the selection criteria. The elite criteria measure meritocratic achievement which is represented by secondary school performance or grade on special examinations. At the mass stage, there is a general acceptance of meritocratic criteria where access is limited but this is qualified by a commitment to equality of educational opportunity leading to ‘compensatory programmes’ and the introduction of additional non-academic criteria designed to reduce ‘inequities’ in the opportunities for admission of deprived social groups and categories.

At the *universal* stage, the criteria are oriented to the equality of group achievement rather than equality of individual opportunity and efforts are made to achieve a social class, ethnic and racial distribution in higher education reflecting that of the population at large (Trow, 1973:14). In other words, what is emphasised at the mass phase is equality for groups at the end of the higher education process. Accordingly, the framework by Trow can be expected to facilitate an understanding by institutional managers that engagement in a variety of responses to regulate access will bring about varied levels of outcomes dependent on the numbers of those who are accessing higher education. I propose to use the above literature on access as follows:

- (i) The definition of access by Heller (2001) has informed the choice of access variables that are tackled in this study, i.e. equity of access, affordability of higher education, and the process (option) of giving future students an opportunity to choose from a variety of institutions by Brenman (Heller, 2001) that is, diversity of institutions and programmes. Additionally the concept of coexistence of public and private universities will be viewed through the lens of additional literature noted below.
- (ii) The concepts of affordability and choice of institutions by Breneman (Heller, 2001) (closely related to programmatic access, financial accessibility, geographic distance and coexistence of public and private universities) will be the concepts and ideas that will be traced in policy documents.

- (iii) Finally, the role of executive managers in formulating and interpreting access policies will be viewed with important implications to the system as proposed by Trow (1973).

(B) Theories relevant to education policy interaction

The second point of focus for this research is to examine the application of the concept of governance of access in policy making and implementation, summarised as policy interaction. It essentially stands for the influence of those who have the influence and power on policy in the agenda-setting stage of the formulation process.

Such ideas about influences surrounding policy were advanced by Ball (1990) when he developed a theoretical framework to understand policy making in education. He posits that education policy making is overshadowed by influences and ideologies. He asserts that as such, when analysing the process there should not be too much emphasis on political institutions but an attempt should be made to trace a specific set of educational issues and the conflicts, pressures and influences which affect their translation into policy. The analysis explores three dimensions of education policy represented by the complexity of the total social system - *the economic, the political, and the ideological* as described below.

- (i) Investigation of the economic system: takes into consideration the funding of education and the contribution that education makes to productivity, that is, the positioning of education in relation to capital.
- (ii) Investigation of the political system: takes into consideration the forms of education governance, the politics of education and the changing role and nature of influential groups and constituencies in the policy process.
- (iii) Investigation of the ideological system: takes into consideration the way the education policy is conceived and discussed.

The framework relating to the social system (economic, political and ideological) as described above by Ball (1990) will be employed in the study when investigating influences and ideologies behind higher education access policies. In this regard, attention was paid to any funding shifts in higher education such as shifting ideologies of supranational bodies such as the World Bank supporting people development as an important catalyst for economic growth in the 1960s and the shift in thinking in the 1980s when higher education in

Africa was considered a luxury among others (Banya & Elu, 2001; Teferra & Albach, 2003; Brock-Utne, 2003; Wangenge-Ouma, 2007; MacJessie-Mbewe, 2008). This study analysed influences behind education policy making, the role of influential groups such as policy actors within government and higher education institutions and their conception of higher education access. The role of the public university in translating (implementation of) higher education policies will be examined as an integrated process to policy making (Gornitzka *et al*, 2005).

Likewise, in a 1999 policy study, Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith (1999) introduced a premise that policy makers' belief system is crucial in exerting influence on decisions made. They contended that policy-making is of sufficient complexity in terms of understanding the relevant laws and regulation, the magnitude of the problem and influence of laws and regulation, and influence of various causal factors and the set of concerned organisations and individuals that have influence on policy.

Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith (1999) also introduced the concept of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), defined as a group of people and organisations interacting regularly over long periods of up to a decade to influence policy formulation and implementation within a given policy area/domain. Sabatier (2005) perceives that application of the ACF had been typically applied to high dispute policy domains, for example environment and energy sectors.

In a 2005 publication, *Reform and change in higher education*, Sabatier discussed the concept of the advocacy coalition framework within the higher education context (Sabatier, 2005). He tentatively hypothesized that higher education enrolment reforms do not involve high goal conflicts and competing belief systems aside from affirmative action programmes.

This study would like to offer an alternative view that in elite systems of higher education, calls to prioritise expansion of higher education enrolments in policy is a domain of high conflict and one which is full of competing and conflicting views and the political system laden with elite cultural norms. This study does not necessarily advocate for the application of a fully fledged Advocacy Coalition Framework similar to those that flourish in mature democratic political systems (Sebatier, 2005).

This study nevertheless would like to highlight the significance of expertise knowledge by executive managers in order to expand the influence and powerbase during policy making and implementation. This will ensure the building of a sound political culture.

This study has obviously omitted other factors shaping the research policy interaction environment such as academic culture, culture of public debate, policy philosophy for the sector concerned, mobility of professionals in the sector settings (UNESCO, 2000) but would like to single out political culture in which the role of ideas is the most crucial ingredient.

The preceding section has demonstrated that the examination of the role of influential groups in the policy process, i.e. those who conceive and implement policy, highlights an important policy dynamic. It gives policy a human face and puts back the spotlight on those who interact with policy and their contribution.

(C) Scholarly literature on governance of enrolments

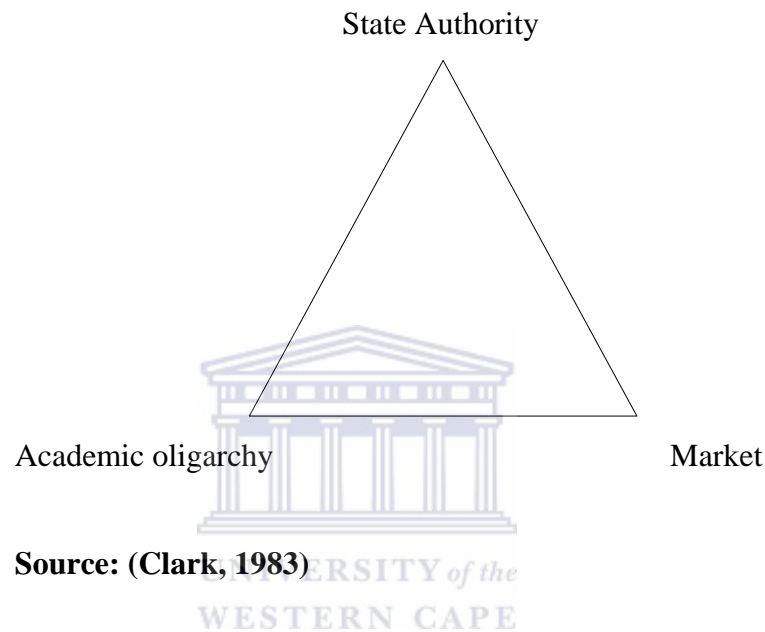
This section will tackle the third point of focus for the study which is the area of enrolments governance.

Of the studies that bear directly on the governance of higher education and enrolments in particular, Clark (1983) conceptualises the notion of governance of higher education. He places emphasis on the corners of the triangle illustrated in Figure 2.3 below, so that universities are either state-directed, market-directed or steered by the academic *oligarchy*. According to Clark, the academic oligarchy is the capacity of groups of academic staff who through formal or informal settings may influence decisions and actions in the higher education system while state authority refers to the efforts that government makes to steer decisions and actions of societal actors, and higher education institutions including the market.

In the triangle of coordination there are multiple relationships depicted, between state authority and academic oligarchy and market as well as the relationship between the market and state authority which exists within government. The state versus academic institution relationships have a large part to play in influencing the final outcome of access indicators. Notably the relationships between institutions such as the Ministry of Education and the university comprise the key components of this relationship. At times the introduction of new programmes in universities (academic oligarchy) happens as a response to a particular demand for specific skills in society (market). The introduction of new programmes and

expansion of access may be related to policies of the state and may trigger positive responses from the state as a steering authority. The response of government in this situation can be that government may increase funding to the university to support the increased student enrolments.

Figure 2.3: Triangle of coordination in higher education



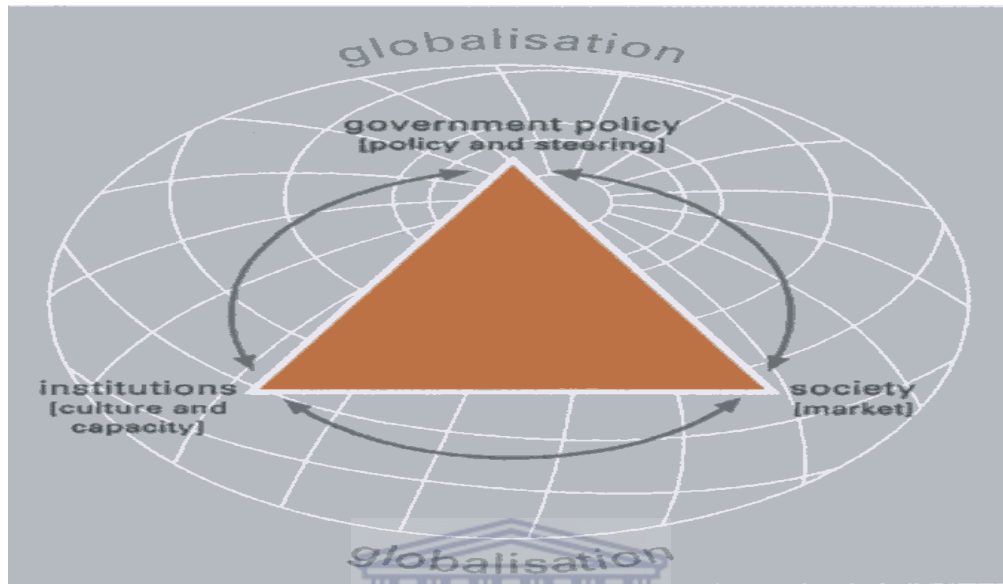
Source: (Clark, 1983)

Cloete and Maassen (2002) provide a re-interpreted model demonstrated in Figure 2.4 below. Instead of the state, market and academic oligarchy (Clark, 1983) they refer to state, society and higher education in the context of globalisation. The model would be useful to understand the coordination and influences that exist during formulation and implementation (governance) of access policies. Unlike Clark's model whose core strength is in the development of the concept of the academic system, the Cloete-Maassen adapted model is a good basis for understanding policy coordination.

In this reinterpreted model, the emphasis is the network of the relationships between the three structures in the triangle representing the growing complexity of higher education. Policy is not the only influence initiating change but it is argued that change is the result of many interactions between many actors leading to many different interpretations of reality in higher education (Cloete and Maassen, 2002). In other words, they show that government, higher

education institutions and society are in a network of interaction and that none of these can exclusively dominate the governance of higher education depending on the context.

Figure 2.4: Cloete and Maassen re-interpretation of Clark’s triangle of coordination



Source: Cloete and Maassen (2002)

This study employed the re-interpreted model as the lens through which governance of enrolments was reviewed as elaborated in the preceding paragraph. For instance, prompts such as *“Other than the state and higher education institution, what other societal influences are there for enrolments planning”* were critically considered in the analysis section. The discussion below emanates from the globalisation point of view as illustrated in Figure 2.4.

Globalisation has been viewed as the most recent phase of modernity in the world and like most social phenomena it is difficult to define and is contradictory. What is not disputed however is the view that globalisation is playing a major role in reshaping culture, politics and education (Rhoades *et al*, 2006; Delanty, 2001). In order to place the governance aspect within contemporary perspectives, the study seeks to understand how globalisation has affected the state (power relations), education and economic growth in society.

Castells (2001) defined globalisation as the new system emerging in the world. Scott (2000) views globalisation as the global competitiveness between great market blocs and intensified collaboration and competition in the emergence of new regional blocs which are economic,

cultural and educational in nature (Moja & Cloete, 2001). However, Castells further categorised globalisation as a code word for the new system emerging and now fully consolidated in the world and presents empirical evidence in order to understand the phenomenon. The character of the new system is associated with trends emerging globally such as rapid technological change, instantaneous communications, changing disparities between wealth and poverty and volatile markets (Crossly & Holmes, 1999).

This section will consider what the literature notes on how globalisation has affected the state in policy making and education in Africa and the relationship to this study. Castells viewed most African countries as being too poor and too fragile to lay even the foundations for sustainable economic take-off due to the asymmetries of globalisation. Critics of the school of thought that African countries are too poor to lay strong foundations for economic take-off, such as Soludo (2001), have argued that while the phenomenon of globalisation is inevitable, its form and character however are subject to change.

At national levels economic growth is viewed as not sustainable without equity (Soludo, 2001). On education, Castells (2001) contends that in the new environment the selection function of the school should be de-emphasized, and instead knowledge and the production function have to be stressed. Higher education access is at the centre of the framework illustrated in Figure 2.4 because higher education institutions as knowledge production centres are instruments that actively transcend the limits of globalisation (Scott, 2000). This is the case because knowledge is fundamental to globalisation (Muller *et al*, 2001).

Further, globalisation is related to the shrinkage of distance and time-delay in communication and travel leading to increasingly extensive and intensive global relations (Marginson, 2002). The relations have taken many forms and include among other factors, the movement of ideas. This feature has facilitated and been facilitated by information and communication technologies (Bloom, 2005). The same implications for widespread access to education was observed by Trow;

‘This has significant implications for higher education access, for instance, information technologies allow and become the vehicle for wider access to higher education of a different order of magnitude with courses of every kind and description available over the internet’ (Trow, 2000: 14).

The significance of knowledge and of attaining higher education has become important in the new global economy according to Castells. According to Castells, the new economy as was the case in other economies is dependent on labour for productivity, although now more uniquely on its ability to deal (generate, process and apply) with knowledge-based information (Muller *et al*, 2001). In the same light the study concentrated on examining whether or not the selection function of education is emphasised in the system under study.

In order to understand the governance aspect in context, this study reviewed the state-higher education relationship (Trow, 1973; Sebatier, 2005). The investigation centred on questions such as:

- What is the position of government on opportunities that come with internationalisation³ of education, use of ICT⁴ and marketisation⁵ with respect to increasing supply of university places?
- Are there enrolment targets set by the government or not?
- Is there any coordination in terms of government setting standards for admission?
- Is there any funding and control strategy in relation to access or throughput (enrolments or number of graduating candidates?)

The Clark (1983) triangle of coordination as re-interpreted by Cloete and Maassen (illustrated above) was utilised for the purpose of investigating the state-higher education institutions relations. Further, the position of the state will be analysed to examine its position on higher education access to ascertain whether the position would help in bridging or increasing the wide gap between those who are accessing higher education knowledge and those who are not (Weber & Duderstadt, 2008).

There are debates between the proponents of state-steering versus institutional autonomy styles of governing higher education in general (Meek, 2009). Meek (2009) posits further that the debates often relate to the ability of universities to exercise initiative within system-wide

³ Maintaining strategic international higher education relationships by taking advantage of cross-border supply of higher education (Scott, 2000)

⁴ Programmes to encourage programme differentiation through support of on-line based programmes with the aim of increasing university places.

⁵ Capitalising on opportunities brought about by the dual track model/ non-residential (private sponsored) programmes already in place. (Wangenge-Ouma, 2008)

authority structures and measured on a continuum that has on one side, a ‘bottom up system where state policy follows rather than leads changes initiated by academics or institutions (high autonomy); on the other hand is the ‘top-down’” system where institutions respond to government policy initiatives enforced by the state (low-autonomy).

The governance debates expounded above are reflected between two scholarly works specifically discussing enrolments governance, that of Nur-Awaleh and Mtegha (2005) on the one hand and Tapper *et al* (2005) on the other. Nur-Awaleh and Mtegha (2005) (while analysing Malawi’s and Somaliland higher education systems) concluded that governments need to safeguard university autonomy in its admission function among other functions.

Of particular concern, in a study by Tapper *et al* (2005), is the question whether in cases where the state decentralises the decisions on student intake numbers to the individual institutions, there is a conflict of interest or lack of compliance in that the actual number of admitted students may differ from the targets set by government. It is against such governance dynamics and dilemmas that this study discussed the intricate aspect of enrolment governance in higher education systems. Following an articulation of the differences between the illustrated models of governing enrolments – state supervision versus institutional autonomy, this study would like to relate with a different approach elaborated in the work by Bunting (Bunting *et al*, 2005), that of government allocating state funding after consultation with institutions’ specific numbers of student places.

The other mechanism that Bunting emphasises is the setting up of enrolment control mechanisms to ensure some balance between equity, quality and size of enrolments, for example a matter of ensuring that disadvantaged students succeed in their studies. As elaborated earlier, this kind of approach would require a centralised structure to oversee such functions. From that point of view, any signs of emergence of such structures were scrutinised in the data. The documented facts on the governance triad pose several conundrums for the aspect of governing enrolments. The analysis constitutes an attempt to present a model where real world governance patterns are resembled. The model, at its present level of analysis, cannot explain the enrolment mechanics. It provides however, an interesting standpoint upon which one may examine different relations between institutions, the state and society (market) at each level of aggregation.

2.10 Summary of Theoretical Framework

The access-policy-governance framework had been adapted to guide data collection and analysis for this study. The framework holds that the mode of governance influences participation in higher education. It also assumes that authority, state supervision, policy control and coordination of enrolments at the national level influence issues surrounding equity, number of students enrolled and participation rates in general. In the application of the access-policy-governance framework to the governance of access concept, the variables are defined and generated by the researcher as follows;

Authority; → Does the state or other factors influence regulation of enrolments?
 → Does the state or other players have checks and balances on number of students accessing higher education?

Supervision; → Are decisions made by universities on enrolments followed by any guidance by Government or other regulatory bodies?
 → Does the state or any other body oversee enrolments and their outcomes?

Policy Oversight; → Does the state and/or other bodies purposefully direct university access?

Coordination; → Are student numbers and composition admitted by universities in line with targets set by national regulatory bodies from time to time?
 → Are decisions made by higher education institutions in admissions done in consultation with national regulatory authorities?

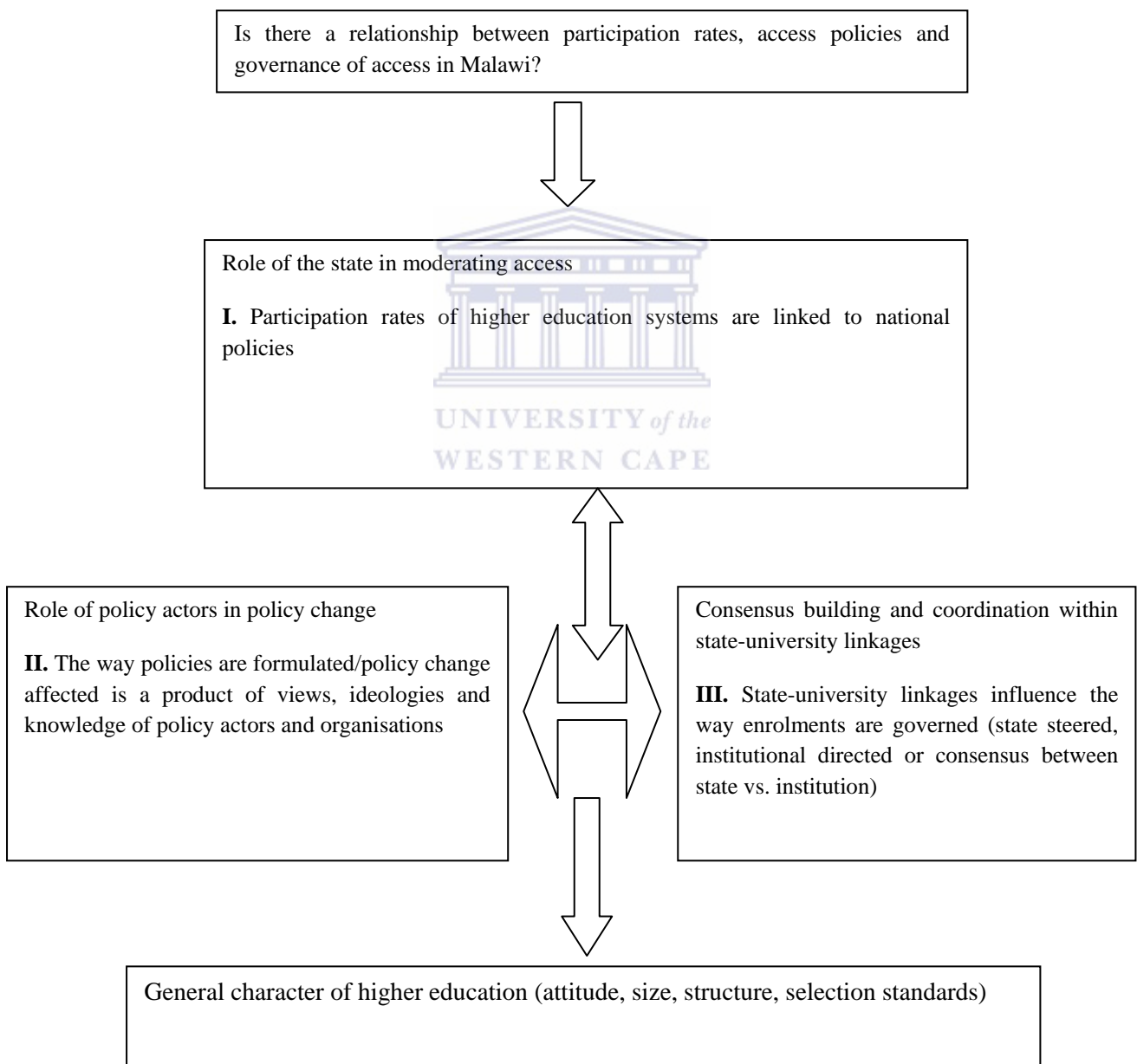
Below is a summary of the framework constructed from the themes identified in the literature in answering the research question “*Is there a relationship between participation rates, access policies and governance of higher education access in Malawi?*” This section tries to develop a more concrete picture of the relationships.

Naturally, certain particulars will be unique to the system under study. The role of the state in moderating access is illustrated in level I, of the framework. Level I can be viewed as

highlighting the significance of the role of the state in any system and its ability to guide higher education participation. The role of policy actors is highlighted in level II.

The policy change process and formulation of policies is dependent on the views and ideologies of policy actors and organisations. Likewise, the coordination or consensus within state-university linkages in coordination of enrolments is illustrated in level III ensuring that not only enrolment size should matter but also issues of quality and financial implications.

Figure 2.5: The access-policy-governance framework



2.11 Conclusion

In the review of the literature covering access theories and concepts, it is evident that a lot of research has centred on this singular subject. Quite often, the main emphasis is on the technical dimension or mechanics of the varied levels of access. It is in many ways difficult to understand the core challenges of a system when it is judged by its participation rate alone. The most important sources of beginning to locate challenges related to accessibility of a system are the area of policy interaction vis-à-vis influences and ideologies behind access policies and the mechanics of governance of enrolment/access.

The study was designed to find out if there is a relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of access in Malawi. The aim of conducting such an investigation is to help locate challenges surrounding systems with low participation rates such as the one under study. A large body of theory and empirical research has already been devoted to identifying dimensions of systems with low participation rates (Trow, 1973; World Bank, 2008; Palfreyman 2005; Maharasoa, 2003; Teffera & Altbach, 2003).

The issue of how those in control of the higher education system could exercise their authority continues to be muddled and most of all mysterious because more often research around the topic has been descriptive of the outcomes or challenges. Furthermore there is sparse information on how leaders may influence governance of enrolments in Africa. The intention of this study was to clarify these matters by studying the role of ideologies in policy change and enrolment governance by the state and higher education institutions. The concept of higher education policy actors for the purposes of this paper is defined to imply organisations or groups involved in policy making, change and implementation.

Therefore challenges faced in elite higher education systems will not be truly uncovered until there is an understanding of ideologies including other important policy influences such as the economic and the political as mentioned by Ball (1990). This concluding statement has a double meaning – not only will the state be able to influence the character of a system in line with existing policies, but the analysis of influential groups' ideologies will assist researchers and planners to start uncovering challenges relating to any access system and its structure.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods used in this study. It discusses the design of the study, the methods for obtaining the data, data sources and selection of respondents and data analysis.

3.2 Research design

Research design is a plan or blueprint of how a researcher intends to conduct research while research methodology consists of the systematic, methodical and accurate execution of the design (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Babbie and Mouton (2001) further clarify that, research methodology may be defined as methods, techniques and procedures that are employed in the process of implementing the research design or research plan. Carter and Little (2007) describe the iterative planning relationship of methodology to objectives by stating that objectives, research questions and design shape the choice of methodology and that methodology shapes the objectives, research questions and design.

Within the context of the research methodology, each research study poses a set of unique questions and articulates specific objectives. The research design functions to articulate the strategies and tools by and through which empirical data will be collected and analysed. Although research methodology and research design are distinct constructs, Punch (2000)⁶ maintains the former to be more holistic than the latter and, in fact inclusive of it.

This study is an exploratory research study which falls under *qualitative* research design. Trochim (2006) illustrates four major qualitative approaches to research that is, *Ethnography* (the culture of defining groups), *phenomenology* (emphasizing people's experiences), and *Grounded theory* focusing on the development of theories through observing people as championed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960's. Other studies advocating for an exploratory method of inquiry when dealing with problems facing higher education have been advanced by Weber (2005). He posits that the method of inquiry for understanding problems facing African higher education should be rooted in the explanation and not description of the problems.

⁶ www.MA-Dissertation.com

One school of thought views exploratory studies as studies that provide insights and assist in the comprehension of an issue or situation. Another school of thought cautions researchers from drawing definite conclusions (Preskill *et al*, 2003). Although this caution questions the reliability⁷ of an exploratory study, Silverman contends that the ultimate standard for any good qualitative research is whether or not the problem tackled has a theoretical and/or practical significance (Silverman, 2006).

3.3 Research approach

A research approach is a methodology that has been adopted to conduct research. The selection of the research approach for this study was done based on specific studies reviewed in the literature review section as follows: firstly, the study by Trow (1973) delineated the contribution of university leaders both academic and administrative to the growth of higher education. In the study, he contended that it is the views of university leaders, albeit not made known in speech and text, which guide their actions. He particularly singled out the views in two broad categories, i.e. elitists versus expansionists. These views would be best explored through interviews.

Although national student enrolment quantitative data was collected and which highlights the status and trends of Malawi's higher education access system, the study is chiefly qualitative in nature. The researcher in this case opted for the qualitative design because it would allow the study of phenomena that does not occur frequently (Silverman, 2006). Silverman further argues that this is in sharp contrast to the quantitative approach which although it has the strength of establishing correlations between variables it does not have the resources to describe how that phenomenon is locally constituted. Further the researcher opted for qualitative research design taking into account the nature of the research questions and objectives of the study. Qualitative research was the preferred choice because of its ability to fully describe a phenomenon. It enables a researcher to describe the analysis in rich detail and offer insights into participants' experiences of the world (Hoepfl, 1997).

3.4 Selection of respondents and research sites

Purposeful sampling technique was used in order to identify participants for the study. As Merriam asserts purposive sampling entails the selection of a sample "from which one can

⁷ Demonstration that you have not invented or misrepresented your data, or been careless or slipshod in your recording or analysis. You must therefore include an explanation of why it is that the audience should believe it to be accurate (Mason, 1996:146; Thody, 2006:99)

learn the most to gain understanding and insight” (Merriam, 1988:48; Mac-Jessie Mbewe, 2004).

In addition, Stake (1995:4) posits that one should select a sample “that can maximise what we can learn” so care was taken that the research sites from where the participants were interviewed had all the necessary characteristics, i.e. experience with the policy issues that the researcher needed to become familiar with. For instance, the research sites had policy actors. This assured the interviewer that leaders involved in policy making, interpretation and implementation were present. Therefore it was ensured that all the sites had one common attribute, that of interaction with higher education policies.

Although the researcher was inevitably aware of the need to be inclusive of the key institutions dealing in the governance of higher education, the primary concern was with the views, interpretations and perceptions of higher education leaders. For the stated target group, the interesting phenomenon under study was the views of the managers on the one hand as well as their perceptions and interpretations on issues such as access and governance.

There were three research sites: (1) the Ministry of Education (Directorate of Planning, Higher Education Directorate, Budget Unit and Finance Unit); (2) University of Malawi Central Office; and (3) Higher Level Committee for the Council of Higher Education. As far as higher education is concerned, Malawian national education policy direction is provided by the Ministry of Education in liaison with key institutions such as universities.

The key participating institutions to the study namely: the University of Malawi, the Ministry of Education and the Higher Level Committee for the formation of the Council for Higher Education were selected for the following reasons:

1. University of Malawi: the presence of the University of Malawi in Malawi is very unique and significant to the entire higher education sector in Malawi. Because of its long history, it plays a critical role in influencing policy for the entire higher education sector. Needless to say, that by 2008 it had a student enrolment of approximately 6,000, representing 75% of the total enrolment for public higher education institutions in Malawi. Its history is also synonymous with the establishment of higher education in Malawi as the first and only post-independence university during the 1960s until the late 1990s.

2. Ministry of Education: The Ministry of Education formulates policies that guide the entire education sector including higher education. The specific sections of the Ministry of Education that participated in the study include the Planning Unit, Higher Education Section, Budgeting Section, and Finance Section.

3. Higher level Committee for the formation of the Council for Higher Education: This committee was selected because it is the committee given the responsibility to develop a foundational framework/bill that was aimed at guiding the targeted development of the higher education sector through the formation of the Council for Higher Education in 2008. The rationale for establishing the Council was perceived at the time of the study as the regulation of higher education and quality issues.

The participants described below were selected because they had years of experience dealing with higher educational policy and overseeing financial and budget issues related to universities.

In Table 3.1 is a list of the fourteen respondents who comprised heads of sections or their deputies and were selected because of their involvement in policy making and implementation. These were the most appropriate people to be interviewed because of their first hand knowledge with policy matters in formulation, change, interpretation and implementation.

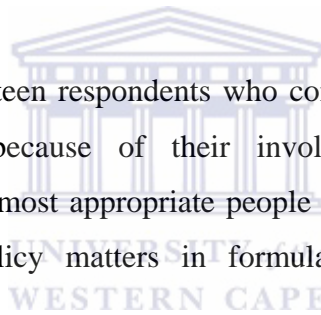


Table 3.1: List of respondents to the study

NO	RESPONDENT	INSTITUTION
1	Director of Planning Unit	Ministry of Education
2	Director of Finance of the Finance Section	Ministry of Education
3	Director of Higher Education	Ministry of Education
4	Director of Budget	Ministry of Education
5	Chief Accountant of the Finance Section	Ministry of Education
6	Principal Economist of the Planning Unit	Ministry of Education
7	University of Malawi Council Chairperson	University of Malawi
8	Vice Chancellor	University of Malawi
9	Pro Vice Chancellor	University of Malawi
10	University Registrar	University of Malawi
11	University Finance Officer	University of Malawi
12	Vice Principal of the Polytechnic	University of Malawi
13	Dean of Education at Chancellor College	University of Malawi
14	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Catholic University of Malawi

The following are descriptions of the subjects. The descriptions explain why the respondents were chosen to participate in the study;

The Director of Planning Unit of the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing educational policies, conducting systematic assessment of capacity for educational policy implementation, development and overall oversight of management of educational institutions. The Director of Planning was interviewed in order to provide information on the policies guiding higher education including the strategies executed in the process of planning of enrolments.

The Director of Finance in the Ministry of Education advises the Ministry on all financial matters, facilitates the preparation and consolidation of budget estimates for consideration by management, ensures that the Ministry's accounting and internal control system is operating at all levels including analysing audit reports from educational institutions. He had worked in government longer than anyone else interviewed and was in the recent past appointed at the Ministry of Education. At the time of the interview he had served in his capacity as Director of Finance for one year.

The Director of Higher Education was selected because he was the officer with overall responsibility for policy issues related to higher education in Malawi. His office is situated within the Ministry of Education and he is responsible for reviewing higher education policies such as the Education Act. He was previously a full time employee of the University of Malawi and had been seconded to the Ministry of Education for a year up until the time of the interview.

The Director of Budget is responsible for restructuring and rationalising resource allocation so that priority areas receive adequate funding, thus ensuring that a strategic approach is conducted as regards the allocation of resources linked to Ministry of Education objectives. He also acts as a bridge between Ministry of Finance and universities on issues related to financial matters and he prepares budgets based on agreed objectives and outputs.

The Chief Accountant in the Ministry of Education assists in preparing budgets for higher education institutions. He was involved in setting up a task force to review student fees for universities. He is also responsible for developing and maintaining financial systems and internal controls that meet the requirements of educational institutions and enforce financial policies.

The Principal Economist facilitated the development of the Malawi Education Sector Plan, provides technical services in the development of the joint financing arrangement for the education sector and outsourcing of non-core functions for the public universities in Malawi. He was directly involved and acted as a link person for the Ministry of Education at the public universities during their process of developing individual institutional policies. He was the right person to provide information relating to initiatives around higher education access.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor for the Catholic University of Malawi was interviewed during the piloting phase of the study. During the interview he provided useful information regarding the relationship between private universities and the Ministry of Education. His duties include direct oversight of day-to-day operations of core education activities including faculty planning and university wide planning as well as dealing with issues related to policy.

The Chairman of the University of Malawi Council, who is also chairman of a higher level committee for the formation of the Council for Higher Education, was also selected. He provided information on how the university approached the problem of limited access and also offered pertinent information regarding the formulation of the Council for Higher Education.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi was selected because he is the principal academic and administrative officer of the university. By virtue of his position, he had the task of translating access policy into action plans. His understanding of government higher education access policies and role in implementing these policies was important for the realisation of this study's goals.

The Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi was selected because of his responsibilities in supporting the academic and administrative goals of the University of Malawi. His key role in the formulation of key national educational policies such as the Malawi Education Sector Plan and the University of Malawi Strategic Plan (2004) gave him the advantage of understanding the rationale for developing access policies for the university and how the university intended to achieve the spelt out access targets.

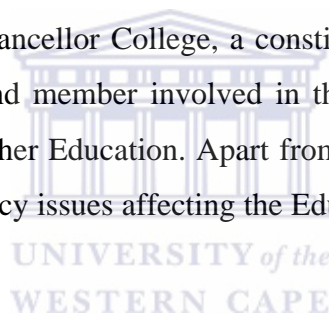
The University Registrar was selected because he is the chief administrative officer of the University under the Vice Chancellor. He is responsible for implementation and interpretation of various university policies of the University of Malawi. As custodian of

university records, the University Registrar was best placed to provide answers to inquiries regarding the vision of the University of Malawi related to the pace of student growth and related future plans.

The University Finance officer was selected because of his role in the financial planning and management of the University of Malawi. He is responsible for the overall budgeting and submission of budget proposals and defending them at the Ministry of Finance, he was involved in the administration of the university students' loan scheme before administration of the fund was handed over to the Public Universities Students Loan Trust.

The Vice Principal of the Polytechnic – a constituent college of the University of Malawi was selected because he is part of the higher level committee for the formation of the Council of Higher Education. The committee was responsible for formulating a draft bill. The bill had various policies related to regulation of the creation and registration of universities.

The Dean of Education from Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi, was selected as a second member involved in the higher level committee for the formation of the Council for Higher Education. Apart from that, the Dean of Education was also involved in dealing with policy issues affecting the Education sector in close liaison with the Ministry of Education.



3.5 Data collection instruments

There were two data collection instruments that the study used as regards interviews and document analysis.

3.5.1 Document analysis

A review of policy documents was conducted. This analysis helped to trace trends, drivers and assumptions behind access to higher education in Malawi. This review of policy documents and other relevant documents was the main data collection method. Below is an outline showing the key policy documents reviewed and the kind of information obtained from the documents.

(a) Statement of Development Policies (1971-1980)

The Statement of Development Policies (1971-1980) is a policy document developed by the Office of the President and Cabinet in liaison with the Economic Planning Division for the period 1971 to 1980. It contains overall development strategies for Malawi such as manpower

development and education, among others. In terms of education and manpower development, the policy makes manpower projections in order of priority. The discussion points that the analysis centred on during the analysis of the policy document included questions such as: What were the most important trends and challenges that the policy recognised and faced in promoting higher education access? The policy document was also scrutinized to establish whether higher education access was placed at the centre of national growth and development strategies.

(b) Second Education Development Plan (1984-1994)

Although the First Education Development Plan was not available to the researcher the second Education Development Plan was reviewed. It contains long term strategies towards the development of the education sector, amongst others. The university enrolment targets in the policy were reviewed.

(c) Statement of Development Policies (1987-1996)

The Statement of Development Policies (1987-1996), the second and last development policy, is a policy document developed by the office of the President and Cabinet in liaison with the Economic Planning Division for the period 1987 to 1996. It contains general policy guidelines for individual government sectors and general matters covering three broad areas in the area of manpower, public finance and national accounts. The discussion points for this document centred on questions such as: How well did the policy express the needs of the higher education sector? What were the strengths and weaknesses in the response to higher education access needs?

(d) Vision 2020 (1998)

The Vision 2020 is a policy document developed by the Economic Council of Malawi in 1998. It is divided into ten chapters and essentially aims to guide development of Malawi in broad areas such as governance, economic growth and development, culture, economic infrastructure, food security and nutrition, human resource development and management, harnessing science and technology development, fair and equitable distribution of development, and natural resources management. The questions that guided the analysis of Vision 2020 included points such as scrutinising how the interaction between higher

education access and development was reflected and how the policy proposed to address practical and policy challenges to higher education access.

(e) Policy Investment Framework (2000)

The Policy Investment Framework is a policy document developed by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. It contains the ministry's response to the Government of Malawi's policy of poverty alleviation and addresses the national educational goals as spelt out in Vision 2020. The discussion points for the Policy Investment Framework centred on questions such as: Did the higher education goals change overtime when compared to previous development policies? In what way were higher education goals integrated into the policy to improve higher education access and equity? What measures had been proposed/targeted for the expansion of opportunities for higher education in general, women and vulnerable groups? And what role have private universities played in the expansion of access opportunities and addressing higher education growth challenges?

(f) Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002)

The Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy paper was developed in 2002 by the Malawi Government. The policy represents a major advance in the fight against poverty. Among its many goals the policy recognises that education brings some social and economic benefits to the country. The analysis of the document centred on questions such as the various ways in which the policy expressed higher education access goals, how higher education access was addressed in the policy as a tool for empowering the poor, what kinds of similarities and differences regarding higher education access were seen in the rest of the policies studied. The final point was to identify higher education policy successes and challenges in comparison with other policies evaluated.

(g) Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (2006-2011)

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy was developed by the Malawi Government as an operational medium-term strategy for Malawi designed to attain the nation's Vision 2020. The document will be analysed in light of questions such as: Were there ways of achieving the specified higher education access goals and was higher education access included as one of government's development priority areas?

(h) National Education Sector Plan (2008-2017)

The National Education Sector Plan was developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 2008. It draws on various policy documents, development plans such as the Policy Investment Framework, and the Vision 2020. Discussion points centred on questions such as: What kind of relationship existed between the state and universities as advocated by the policy document as well as tracing university intake/guidelines.

(i) University of Malawi Strategic Plan (2004-2010)

The University of Malawi Strategic Plan was developed in 2004. The plan was meant to assess the contribution the University has made to national development in its 42 years of existence and the need to plan for the future in the context of globalisation and the current condition of the institution. The plan among other strategies advanced ideas for structural changes in the University including how the University could gear itself to be more relevant to the needs of the 21st century. The analysis involved reviewing the document for university intake goals and conducting an evaluation on whether the university intake goals have changed since the university was established, as well as identifying the assumptions that were inherent in the document regarding university intake.

(j) Minutes of University of Malawi admissions meetings

The minutes of University of Malawi admissions meetings considered, among other issues, projected enrolment of university students for all five colleges of the University of Malawi.

In view of the fact that policies are formulated and interpreted by people, it was in the interest of the study to interview managers involved in the formulation and interpretation (translation) of such policies. This study was therefore centred on document review and interviews falling under the qualitative design. The purpose of the design was to trace the positioning of higher education access in policy documents, assess opinions on access and university attendance as well as gain insights into policy interpretation by a sample of interviews with executive managers.

3.5.2 Interviews

Planning and governance of enrolments has an important influence on participation rates. Interviews were administered to fourteen purposefully selected individuals who are knowledgeable about enrolment governance. The in-depth interviews provided data and an

understanding of enrolment governance, and explored ways in which the state and public universities interacted on issues related to enrolment planning and projections. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that took about 30 minutes to administer. Interview guides were used to direct the in-depth interviews. The guides were used to orient questioning during interviews with the higher education personnel as an additional method of data collection in order to acquire the depth of the data collected. This was used to note and check observations with the interviewees for ideas which contradicted or enhanced the original ideas gathered from policy documents (Silverman, 2000), which in effect was the primary method of data collection.

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003:180), “in-depth interviewing is the hallmark of qualitative research”. It is also stated that in-depth interviewing is very important in order for the researcher to understand how participants view their worlds, and both interviewer and interviewee to ‘co-construct’ meaning. In addition, as put by Marshall and Rossman (1999:108) “an interview is a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly”. Furthermore, open-ended questions were used during interviews to minimise bias (Silverman, 2000).

3.6 Procedures used

The researcher initiated contact and sought consent from participants. The interviews were mostly directed towards clarifying various access and governance of access variables.

All but one was interviewed at their place of work with interviews lasting 20 to 30 minutes each.

Without exception, all 14 interviewees agreed to be interviewed after the researcher explained the purpose of the research in addition to the letter of consent granting permission from key institutions.

3.7 Validity and reliability

A study is reliable only if another researcher, using the same procedure and studying the same phenomenon, arrives at similar or comparable findings (Sekaran, 2003). Hence it is important that the researcher maintains a comprehensive protocol of his/her study, in case others may be interested in checking reliability (Sekaran, 2003).

Accordingly, the researcher was careful in selecting her respondents ensuring that they were indeed willing and appropriate participants and that the interview guide was carefully

constructed, pilot-tested at a private university and checked by the supervisor. The researcher used the interview guide to orient the interview process where it became necessary.

The researcher also recorded and transcribed all interviews in verbatim. This was essential in order not to lose the original meaning of the respondent's responses.

Data collection validity was ensured by establishing a chain of events throughout the data collection process, by verifying key information through use of multiple sources of information. This was carried out by taking advantage of multiple sources of the same data using policy documents (national and institutional) and cross-checking for the same information from managers during interviews.

3.7.1 Piloting of the interview guide

The research instrument (see appendix B) comprising structured and semi-structured interviews was piloted at a private university, the Catholic University of Malawi, to test the coherence and validity of the instrument. This university was selected because of its easy access to one of the main research sites, the University of Malawi in Zomba, where the researcher was based. The interview guide aimed to elicit the experiences of managers involved in higher education policy issues. In other words, the instrument was tested to establish if it was robust enough to elicit detailed descriptions of access policies, governance of the institutions as well as how the institutions relate to the state on general policy issues and enrolment planning.

An interview session was arranged with the Deputy Vice Chancellor of that institution. He was familiar with policy and governance issues. The respondent was purposively selected after he was recommended by the Registrar of the University after the researcher had explained the information the interview was required to elicit. The preliminary interview questions which were developed for the respondents to the study were refined and made clearer as a result of the insight gained during the pilot phase, for instance, the interview guide was improved upon by introducing probing questions. Probing questions which were added were follow-up questions to main questions such as: What communication channels/modes of interaction are there between government and university? The follow-up question in that case was: Can you please elaborate on the modes of interaction referred to in your response?

All institutions contacted to participate in the study gave written permission to the researcher. Initial contact was made with all participants to inform them about the study and consent was granted in all cases. The policy documents were accessed through the public relations offices of the institutions involved.

The study collected data while protecting the confidentiality of individual respondents. Names or other personal information was not shared with anyone outside the study.

3.8 Data analysis

Using the deductive and inductive approaches, the analysis of the policy documents and interviews (transcribed) data was qualitative. The deductive analysis approach works from the general to the more specific, i.e. conclusions follow logically from premises (available facts) or theory while the inductive approach works the other way – conclusion arises from observed patterns (Burney, 2008).

Consistent with the inductive approach, frequent, dominant and significant categories inherent in the raw data were identified and these were used as categories (Thomas, 2006). The recorded interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher after each interview had taken place. The data analysis began as soon as each transcribed interview was over. Once the transcripts had been typed, they were printed out and read several times over in order to understand the data. After all fourteen interviews conducted at the University of Malawi and Ministry of Education had been transcribed and read, it was possible to see some common issues. The data was then indexed in specific categories. Having identified and assigned specific categories from printed interview transcripts it was then possible to isolate specific quotes from all the relevant interviewees. With this level of analysis, comparisons between the interviewees' approach to an issue and exploration of relevant categories was possible.

After the policy documents were printed, they too underwent the same process.

In line with the deductive approach, both data sources were used to characterise the various variables of the access-policy-governance framework. Codes such as access, equity, state-university linkages drawn from the literature were used to assign to data in order to map the characteristics of the text from both sources so that patterns can be discovered. Patterns found in the data were used in conjunction with the theoretical framework to explain the findings and answer the research objectives.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The researcher complied with ethical principles which aimed to protect the dignity and privacy of every individual who was interviewed. The people interviewed were requested to provide information about their experiences, including views on policy, access and governance issues.

Before an individual became a participant, they were notified of the following;

- The aims, methods and anticipated benefits of the research;
- Their right to abstain from participation in the research and right to terminate at any time their participation;
- No individual became a participant unless they were given prior notification of the interview and the researcher was provided with consent that they had agreed to participate.

The research went through the University of the Western Cape project registration and ethics clearance process. This was done by filling form SR1 issued by the Dean of Research. This form among other issues addressed frequently asked questions often asked by respondents regarding the study and an informed consent page where the respondent was supposed to sign, indicating their agreement to participate in the research.

3.10 Summary

As may be deduced from the above, the research constructed a conceptual framework, and used the qualitative and deductive methodological approach.

There is no claim here that there were no limitations to the document analysis and interview approaches delineated in this chapter. However, given the parameters of the scope, time and resources of the researcher it was decided that the defined methodological approach best satisfied the articulated objectives and responded to the research question.

The next chapter shall review documents and interview transcripts, primarily focusing on the presentation of the results.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data that were collected. These findings resulted from interviews and the analysis of nine policy documents. The findings are preceded with a description of the research context.

4.2 Research context

4.2.1 Country background

Malawi is a landlocked and developing country which lies to the south of the equator in sub-Saharan Africa. The country is bordered by Tanzania in the north, Zambia in the west and Mozambique in the south east and south west (refer to Figure 4.1). The country is administratively divided into three regions: the Northern, Central and Southern regions. Each region is further divided into districts.

A total of 10% of Malawians are said to live in the main urban areas of Blantyre city, Lilongwe city, Mzuzu and Zomba cities. In addition, 12%, 42% and 46% of the population live in the Northern, Central and Southern regions respectively. According to gender distribution, 49% of the population is male while 52% of the population is female (MacJessie-Mbewe, 2004).

The population of Malawi is estimated at 13,066,320 according to the 2008 population census (NSO, 2009). In 2008, Malawi's GNP per capita was estimated to be \$289, placing it amongst the ten poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2001b; Rose, 2002). This section has provided an overview of the main features of Malawi's political, economic and demographic features. These facts have been presented as a backdrop to the rest of this chapter which focuses specially on the higher education sector.

Malawi has numerous higher education institutions, of which two, the University of Malawi and Mzuzu University, are publicly funded (SARUA, 2010). In response to the growing demand for higher education, government has to date accredited four private universities enabling them to operate in the country. The Ministry of Education had always been the central regulatory body until the Council of Higher Education was recently established to oversee issues related to higher education. There is a great demand for higher education especially because the carrying capacity of the existing higher education institutions is very

limited. As a result, the last decade has seen the mushrooming of unregulated higher education institutions.

Figure 4.1: General orientation and basic data on Malawi



Source: www.state.gov

4.3 Data structure

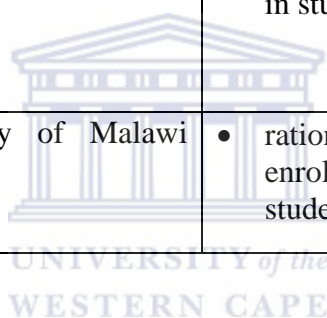
The researcher categorised the data into three major themes, categories and sub-categories. The broad major themes were recognised in terms of their relationship to the main research question which borders on issues of access, state-university linkages and role of policy actors.

The results of the data analysis are discussed according to the main themes and categories that emerged from the data. Appropriate direct quotes are used where necessary to clarify the results and in some instances literature is provided to augment the findings.

Table 4.1: Summary of policies containing access goals

	POLICY DOCUMENT REVIEWED	GENERAL HE ACCESS GOALS
1	Statement of Development Policies (1971-1980)	None
2	Second Education Development Plan (1984-1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> total tertiary level enrolments will not exceed 3,700 by the end of the plan period because of financial restraints
3	Statement of Development Policies (1987-1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase undergraduate enrolment by 40% increase female enrolment to 35% of the total student population by 2010 increase postgraduate enrolment to 10% of the undergraduate student population
4	Policy Investment Framework (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishment of a student loan scheme by the government for needy students enhancing access by facilitating establishment of private higher education institutions introduction of measures to reduce existing regional and district access disparities increase female participation in HE
5	Vision 2020 (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review admission conditions to encourage needy students to enrol encourage establishment of private universities encourage enrolment of

		women and special needs students
6	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve access and equity in education by focusing on girls, orphans and special needs students
7	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (2006-2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve gender ratio and inclusiveness of students with special needs
8	National Education Sector Plan (2008-2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure gender balance and inclusion of needy and vulnerable groups
9	University of Malawi Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase female student intake by 30% implement affirmative action in student admission
10	Minutes of University of Malawi admissions meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rationale for projected enrolment of university students



4.4 Presentation of themes and categories

The major themes and categories presented below are categorised by research objectives:

- A. *How can access policies and their outcomes between 1984 and 2008 in Malawi be conceptualised and explained?*

Below is a presentation of the data derived for the research question stated above.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Access (overview)

The major theme that emerged from the data is that of *access*. All the other categories and themes appear to relate to this central issue. The categories that fall in this theme are factors constraining access to higher education, irrelevance of programmes to existing market needs, equitable access, funding constraints, non-residential students programme and private university establishment as outlined below.

4.4.1.1 Factors constraining access to higher education

An emerging category that was emphasised by the informants was their perception of factors that undermined access to university education. One way in which the participants' expressions were similar with policy statements was their description of *limiting factors of access*.

Of the issues that were raised, this dominant theme revolved around categories of *limited access due to shortage of space, inadequate funding, modalities for admission, and inadequate bed space*. There was a connection between the respondents' descriptions of what they observed as shortfalls towards attaining access to higher education and the overall theme of factors constraining access to higher education. Although the issue of low student numbers admitted to the university was in general seen as a challenge, it became clear in the Second Education Development Plan (1984-1994) that it was a deliberate move on a national level to limit student growth: "Total tertiary level (EFTS) enrolments will not exceed 3,700 by the end of the plan period... (MOE, 1982; 33)" because tertiary education had to adjust to a period of "financial restraint of both a development and recurrent nature (MOE, 1982: 3)." The plan to exercise constraint on the financial and expansion of the tertiary education sector was done with the intention to curtail expansion in order to serve new areas of manpower needs such as the technical and vocational sector.

The University of Malawi has, since its first intake of students in 1965, primarily admitted students based on available bed space. The policy for admitting students based on bed space, which has been in practice since the inception of the university, was illustrated by the projected enrolment of university students' record dated 17th December 1979 which stipulated that: "The main constraint to expand enrolments is hostel accommodation and all related facilities. In the light of this situation and meaningful projection of the student population in the University of Malawi for the coming few years must be related to physical development programmes for the four constituent Colleges" (UNIMA, 1979;1) .

Table 4.2: UoM overall bed space capacity (overall student population): 1965 – 2005

YEAR	1965	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
HEI ENROLMENTS	90	1,289	1,756	2,361	3,117	2,683	3,416

Source: University of Malawi

The University of Malawi Strategic Plan conveyed the setback in the same light, stating that it was more of a policy constraint than anything else because “normal intake is based on bed space (required to house all students) and that the University Act also has provisions for the University to provide accommodation to all students it admits, which is creating management difficulties” (UNIMA Strategic Plan, 2004; 29). Refer to Table 4.2, displaying the overall bed space capacity for the University of Malawi for the period 1965 to 2005. Refer to **Table 4.2** displaying the overall bed space capacity for the University of Malawi.

The University Registrar was asked to elaborate on the constraining manner of this policy as explained in the Strategic plan. The University Registrar responded by highlighting that he felt that there was a misunderstanding of the issue by the framers of the Strategic Plan and that the “the University Act was flexible for the University to admit students in any way. The real constraint was the determination of fees not admission of students”.

One participant at the Ministry of Education referred to the university as having the key to the problem of access:

“... to improve your governance, you have a restrictive regulatory framework which doesn't allow you to open up – here is a university which thinks of bed space when it is admitting. That to me is negative. It should be able to say Zomba should be seen as a university town where you have so many houses, one worries that all these could turn into ruins... 6 to 10 students could be coming out of one house fully knowing that nothing that happens at the university affects me”.

To remedy the bed space constraint the National Education Sector Plan (MoE, 2008), devised priorities, strategies and guiding principles aimed at the universities' ability to house bigger student population in the universities, by recommending that the universities should “entice the private sector to construct student flats and other forms of accommodation” (page 25), because it was envisaged that such a move would ensure the minimum direct involvement in accommodation matters by the universities.

Due to bed space limitations, public universities in Malawi had a limited carrying capacity when it came to admission of the majority of secondary school leavers. This was exemplified by one manager at the Polytechnic, a constituent college of the University of Malawi who said: “You know both the University of Malawi and Mzuzu University take less than 20 or 30

percent of secondary students and then 80 percent go to private universities both in Malawi and abroad”.

In view of the apparent sensitisation that the public universities were lagging behind in their enrolments, those in leadership positions expressed a strong desire for change of the described status quo.

The last declared bed space capacity by the University of Malawi was just over 5,500 in 2007 (UNIMA, 2007).

For some managers, there were specific reasons, other than limited bed space capacity, that resulted in a lack of achievement on the part of the university, in particular a lack of other resources. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi reflected on how the University failed to reach its enrolment targets as reflected in the Strategic Plan of the university thus:

“Well, sitting back in those years we got a vision that this should be visible on condition of the availability of lecture rooms and laboratories so the question is whether these provisions were taken care of? The answer is no. And therefore it is a question of reviewing such a strategy on an annual basis. Right now we are talking about 6,000. There is no way we can up that figure to 9,000 to meet the original target because we were not fully in control because of the kinds of resources which would lead us to such a large student population.”

The participants hinted that increasing enrolments has “not proven to be feasible because of infrastructural limitations”. It was emphasised that the university needed more teaching and accommodation facilities. The limitations to access that many of the participants expressed with respect to the University of Malawi were reiterated by an earlier reform study conducted by the Malawi Institute of management (MIM) in 1997. The study reported that the University of Malawi did not have sufficient capacity to satisfy the needs of a rapidly growing population. It further stated that by the standard of sub-Saharan Africa, the growth in student enrolment has been dismal – growing from an intake of 90 in 1965 to 3,600 in the 1996/97 academic year and that the potential of the University’s capacity had not been fully exploited.

Against a background of limited enrolments when mirrored against other sub-Saharan African higher education systems, the University of Malawi’s structure characterised by five

campuses and a central office with low student enrolments was described by the MIM Report of 1997 as presenting a case where “over-capacity coexists with capacity under-utilisation” implying spatially grand plans but with limited student numbers (MIM, 1997:33). Table 4.3 below illustrates a 30 year overall enrolment growth pattern for the University of Malawi.

Table 4.3: 30 year overall enrolment growth pattern for University of Malawi

Year	Total National Population (Est.) (52% Female)	Total University Enrolment	Percentages of Girls enrolment
1965	4,039,583	90	24%
1973	5,547,460	1,054	4.07%
1995	9,933,868	2,683	33.09%
2008	13, 066, 320	5, 845	30%

Sources: University of Malawi, National Statistical Office (2009)

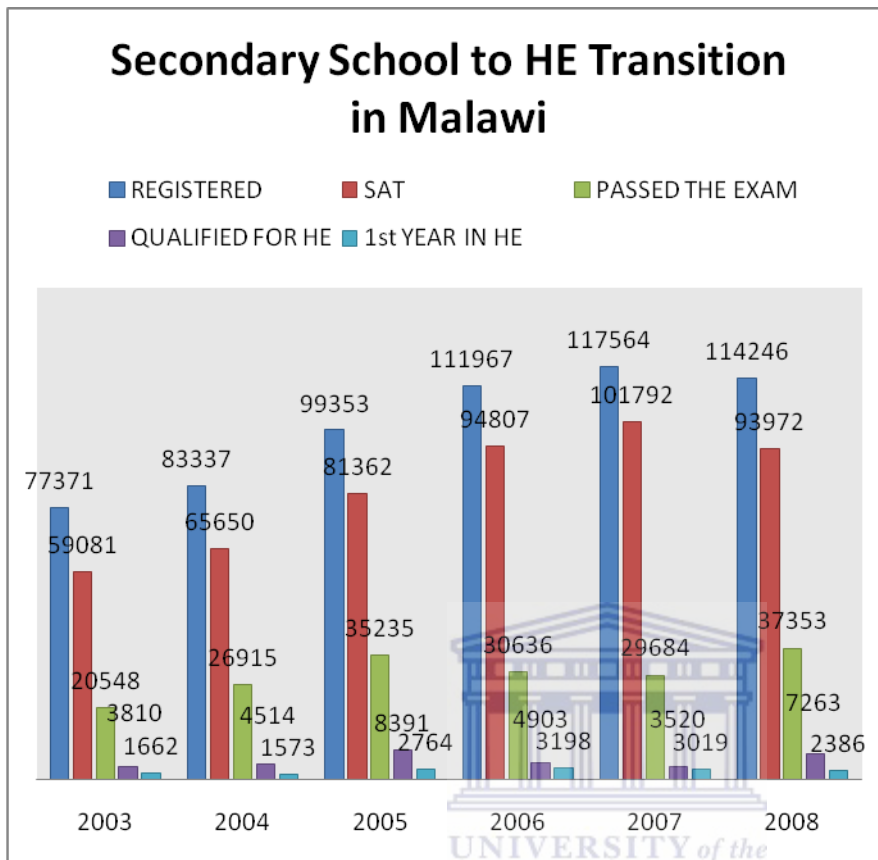
During the 30 year period of 1964 to 1994, student enrolment increased from 90 in 1965 to 1,054 in 1973. Major growth in student enrolment was constrained to some extent by the limited physical facilities available (UNESCO & World Bank, 1987). However the latest drive at the University of Malawi is to expand teaching and learning space as observed by a respondent: “The current direction... is to expand the teaching and learning area... and leave the accommodation bit to the private sector”.

The University of Malawi’s space and infrastructural constraints were seen as major limiting factors as far as access to university was concerned. Chimombo explained that this was the situation because the physical facilities at the University and the financial resources had not been expanded to respond to the increasing population of eligible candidates for higher education (Chimombo, 2003) (See the funding pattern for University of Malawi in Table 4.4).

The overall picture of the students' transition from secondary school to higher education shows interesting results within the limited access category. The portrayed trend is in line with the fact that the University of Malawi takes in very few students admitting about 1% of the students that sit for the Malawi School Leaving Certificate of Examinations due to space limitations (Nampota, undated:6). The results in Figure 4.2 (a and b) are displayed on the next page.



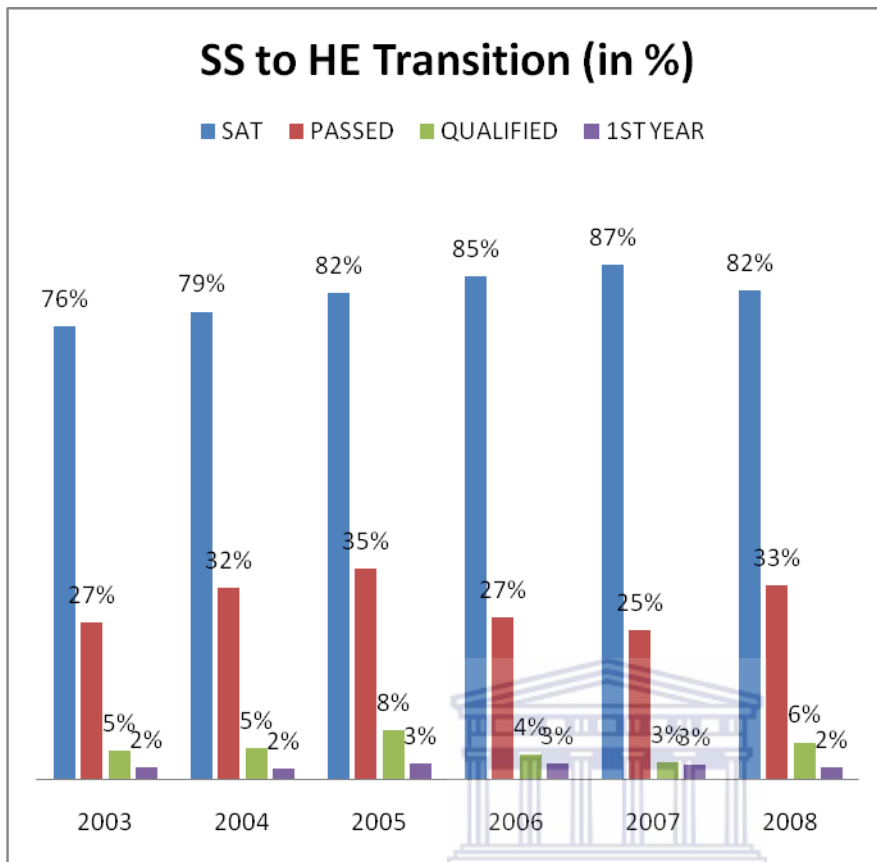
Figure 4.2a: Secondary school to higher education transition in Malawi (in absolute figures)



Key: Registered = Registered for Malawi school certificate of exams (MSCE)
 Sat = Sat for Malawi school certificate of exams (MSCE)
 Passed = Passed the Malawi school certificate of exams (MSCE)
 HE = Higher education

Sources: Malawi National Examinations Board, University of Malawi, University of Livingstonia, Mzuzu University, Share World Open University and Catholic University of Malawi

Figure 4.2b: Secondary school to higher education transition in Malawi (in percentages)



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

- Key:** Registered = Registered for Malawi school certificate of exams (MSCE)
 Sat = Sat for Malawi school certificate of exams (MSCE)
 Qualified = Qualified or eligible for higher education
 Passed = Passed the Malawi school certificate of exams (MSCE)
 SS = Secondary school
 HE = Higher education
 1st year = First year of higher education

Sources: Malawi National Examinations Board, University of Malawi, University of Livingstonia, Mzuzu University, Share World Open University and Catholic University of Malawi

However, the assertion by Nampota (undated :6) which suggests that the University of Malawi accepts about 1% of students who write the School leaving Examinations need to be revisited.

The 1% of students in question seen through the lens of the transition figures from school leaving examinations to admissions as illustrated by Figures 4a and 4b suggests a different picture. It is probable that the 1% may be the transition between those who qualify and those who are admitted and not between those that sat for school leaving examinations versus those that were finally admitted as intimated by Nampota. This factor is stemming from the realization that in 2008 only 33% of students who registered for MSCE passed, while 6% of who were eligible moved on to higher education and that out of these, only 2% were admitted at the University of Malawi.

On the other hand there is a huge drop in comparison between number of students who qualified versus those that were admitted for the years 2005, 2007 & 2008. Perhaps the capacity quota and the barrier set by the University Entrance Examinations could be the salient factors explaining the gap. From this perspective, the 2008 World Bank participation rate of 0.4% may need to be understood and accounted for from different perspectives from time to time.

From the data presented by respondents, the issues that were mentioned under the category of factors constraining access to higher education were similar in their nature. The issues included the policy to admit students based on available bed space and resource constraints vis-à-vis lack of finances and limited nature of teaching space and facilities to accommodate expanded enrolments. Participants who singled out the policy to admit students based on bed space as the genesis of the problem highlighted the need to review that particular policy in the University of Malawi so that teaching space alone should be used to determine the number of students to be admitted if possible.

4.4.1.2 Funding Constraints

The other category that emerged from the data is that of inadequate funding. The Vice Chancellor for instance elaborated on the manner in which funding challenges affected the University of Malawi's ability to admit more students. He confessed that: "There is an interesting dilemma but this is all finally based on inadequate resources available through the subvention, the whole idea of admitting students on the basis of a fixed subvention sum instead of demanding that students pay or secure scholarships".

The idea of funding challenges was a recurring category that emerged especially from the viewpoint that the subvention that the University of Malawi received was continually decreasing from what was budgeted for as illustrated below.

In his reflection, the University Registrar reported that: “funding has not been done to our expected level” in as far as supporting efforts to admit more students were concerned. A case in point is how the University of Malawi Strategic Plan (2004/5-2009/10) expressed the challenge: “inadequate funding has been the bottom line in that funding for the University has suffered in real terms, particularly during the last 10 years” (UNIMA, 2004) (Also see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4, below, illustrates the capacity of the University of Malawi (UNIMA) seen against government funding from 1965 to 2005.

Table 4.4: UNIMA funding for the period 1965 – 2005 against total student enrolment

YEAR	UNIVERSITY BUDGET	GOVERNMENT SUBVENTION	TOTAL STUDENT ENROLMENT
1965	*	*	90
1970	*	*	651
1975	*	K2,919,677.10 (USD 3,106,039.46)	1,289
1980	*	K4,312,603 (USD 5,390,753.75)	1,756
1985	*	K8, 000, 000 (USD 4, 705, 882.35)	2,361
1990	K21, 087, 000 (USD 7,781,180)	K19, 385, 000 (USD 7, 153, 136.53)	3, 117
1995	K152, 099, 000(USD 9, 993, 363.99)	K147, 896, 000 (USD 9, 717, 214.19)	2, 683

2000	K680, 000, 000(USD 12, 509, 197.93)	K450, 000, 000 (USD 8, 278, 145.69)	3,416
2005	K2, 676, 208, 346 (USD 21, 979, 372.09)	K2, 300, 000, 000 (USD 18, 889, 618.92)	5,927

*data not available

Source: University of Malawi (2009)

Table 4.5: Average annual foreign exchange rates (Malawi Kwacha per us dollar) 1, 2

MWK	0.94	0.80	1.70	2.71	15.22	54.36	121.76
YEAR	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005

Source: Reserve Bank of Malawi & National Bank of Malawi

- 1- Averages of daily rates quoted by the Reserve Bank for dealing with commercial banks in Malawi.
- 2- From 7th February, 1994 the Malawi Kwacha exchange rates became market determined.

The University Finance Officer perceived the under-funding situation from a different viewpoint. He perceived that Government had been forthcoming with financial support in other areas and addressed the opinion in this way: “You know last year in 2008, we were able to make some outsourcing of some services and government gave some strong support to provide funding. They seem very keen that things which were left lying must be addressed...and the issue of fees is just one of them.” Nearly all respondents who spoke on the funding challenge also observed another aspect of the challenge, i.e. the lack of human resource capacity within the University of Malawi. The University Finance Officer remarked:

“We are expected to prepare development proposals to send to Ministry of Economic Planning. I don’t know if it’s the problem of capacity internally that we don’t have

people to sit down and make proposals. It will take some time to see infrastructure being expanded. We don't have people who can sit down and write these proposals. We can only blame government if we had submitted proposals and government said no.”

While the University Registrar expressed a similar thought in this way:

“I think I shouldn't be too fair to bash government only. Even within our own universities we have tended to think of ourselves as employees but we are more than employees. We are stakeholders and the moment we start thinking as stakeholders our responsibility as citizens will certainly be better than what it is at the moment”.

4.4.1.3 Non residential students programme

Apart from the already identified categories of constraining access and underfunding challenges, the introduction of the non-residential programmes was singled out by respondents as a solution to challenges resulting from the bed space policy.

The respondents observed that since initiation of this programme in the University of Malawi to counteract the constraint of limited bed space there was noticeable improvement. The University Finance Officer, who has worked for the University of Malawi since the 1980s, addressed the issue in this way: “...the enrolment issue historically has been static until the non-residential programme came into place.” Analysing what the University Finance Officer said one could assume that the University of Malawi was not facing the same level of access challenges after the inception of the non-residential programme in 2002. In view of the new programme, an enrolment growth spurt occurred from 2002 since the introduction of the non-residential student programmes. The growth spurt which was experienced has been illustrated in Figure 1.2 of Chapter 1. There was a sharp rise in total enrolments of public higher education institutions at this time. The rise in enrolments from around 4,500 in 2003 to just over 8,000 in 2008 took place following the introduction of the non-residential programme at the University of Malawi. The non-residential student programme did not arise from an existing policy but was championed by a group of the University Management Team after an official tour of Makerere University in Uganda. One respondent had this to say on how the programme was initiated: “This one came as a brain child of a tour University of Malawi managers made to Uganda, where they had the opportunity to visit the University of

Makerere, which in many respects... had similarities with the University of Malawi in terms of the challenges it was facing...” The Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi who was part of the team that went to Makerere University reminisced about what they experienced in Uganda:

“When we went to Makerere and visited the Makerere Business School. That is when this issue came up. It was noticed that Makerere Business School makes most of its money out of the non- residential students...The ICT Department teaches over night. Apparently they lock their doors at 10pm or midnight and open at 6am the following day”.

At the time of the study the non-residential student programme otherwise referred to as the parallel programme was in the process of being institutionalised as a key respondent noted: “And actually we are just trying to formalise that parallel system for the moment. It hasn’t been institutionalised per se so we want to institutionalise it from the Act and from the policies”. The non-residential students programme seemed to be the programme that was to be earmarked, in the future, to solve the challenges of limited student enrolment that came about largely as a result of the bed space admission policy as echoed by the Dean of Education at Chancellor College:

“The thinking is, if we could outsource this accommodation thing...so that it is not part of us. For us we should just select students and in so doing we might select even more...The selection in this scenario will be based upon the space that is there for the classroom and all that”.

Similar sentiments were also expressed by the Pro Vice Chancellor who remarked that:

“We want to change the policy so that we don’t tie in intake to bed space and also we only tie in residence to the first and second years...so that the third and fourth years can find accommodation anywhere else. But that can only work if the policy regarding how government funds the students is taken care of”.

There was hope that the non-residential students programme would succeed in counteracting the access challenges as outlined by the University Registrar:

“At Polytechnic, Chancellor College, I do foresee a situation whereby that number of non-residential students may increase even more because we can increase it without increasing the numbers of members of staff because our student-lecturer ratio is already poor and if we raised it, it should not be too much of a burden.”

4.4.1.4 Irrelevance of available programmes to existing labour market

Irrelevance of programmes to existing market needs emerged as another category under the major theme of access. Numerous policy statements on education regarded manpower supply as problematic. The problem has been attributed in part to the manpower supply policies and decisions affecting education and training in the 1970s. One of the negative effect of the decisions made in the past was the considerable length of time to convert human ‘inputs’ in formal education into educated and trained ‘outputs’ (OPC; EPD, 1971; 91). In the late 2000s the problem had been attributed to lack of or bad planning in general due to, among other issues, the higher education system operating from an incorrect curriculum and syllabi (Nyasa Times, 2009). Several participants spoke about the need “to tailor our programmes to meet the demands of the country” and that what was being taught was not what “the labour market needed”. When probed about how the university was fairing in terms of access, some participants made relevant comments such as “the university was producing scientists that were not taught the kind of science and technology that enables you to innovate”. This led to the belief that irrelevance of programmes to existing market needs was a central issue. The Director of Higher Education, for instance, highlighted that the Ministry of Education was once in the practice of conducting manpower surveys whereby gaps could be identified in the labour market. During the period in question the Ministry of Education after monitoring the trends could request universities to conduct training where gaps were identified. It became apparent at the time of the study that these surveys were no longer being carried out. As he reflected on the current situation he described the fate of those surveys: “These manpower surveys, I don’t know when last we had those, but I bet they have not been there for the past 15 years”.

Participants in the survey expressed the feeling that they began to experience the effects of the mismatch or friction of the available programmes and labour market needs more particularly after university students graduate. The University of Malawi’s failure to offer relevant programmes was considered a tangible anomaly because it minimised students’

choice of university programmes, career marketability after graduation, and thus was likely to render university education irrelevant. The Dean of Education at Chancellor College for instance observed that:

“Another interesting thing is that in the Malawian Civil Service, for example, the job vacancy levels are so high and they are desperately looking for people to fill those vacancies. Yet there is this thing some of us are failing to understand why graduates should be walking around jobless when there are these vacancies”.

Some of the skills that were cited by the Principal Economist, University Registrar and Dean of education as lacking and gaps that were identified in the labour market were for people with entrepreneurial skills, teachers, and scientist who could work with companies such as Illovo Sugar Malawi.

A critical analysis of the ‘programmatic access’ or ‘skills gap’ concept in policies has been identified in the analysed policies. The University of Malawi Strategic Plan (2004) declares that there are: “Constraints to accessibility of higher education: academic constraints which are making some programmes unattractive to students.” The policy elaborates on the fact that there are limited postgraduate programmes and that most programmes are in areas that are donor driven. Some policy statements have a general description of the irrelevance of programmes to existing market needs and ways to circumvent the situation such as the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) (Mgov, 2006), which stated that: “At tertiary levels it is expected that there will be increased access, improved quality and relevant education”. While some had very specific strategies to overcome the ‘skills gap’ bottleneck such as the medium term expected outcomes of the MGDS to “improve curriculum to respond to national needs”. The National Education Sector Plan (Mgov, 2008) however provides probably the clearest description of the mismatch: “Unemployment among Malawi university graduates is thought to be relatively high, calling into question the alignment between offered course and national needs”.

For the Director of Planning, it was the type of planning used by the Ministry of Education that was a root cause of the problem. He expounded further stating: “that the Ministry of Education was bogged down with inertia or usual planning after abandoning the idea of manpower plans” while the University lacked “flexibility” in terms of programmes offered, a situation which he felt prevented the students from discovering their niches within the offered

courses. Other than the manpower surveys, the Statement of Development Policies (1971-1980) cited what became coined as the 'utilisation project', which was set up to establish more detailed short-run needs for trained manpower "to enable efficient matching of available trained manpower to employer needs". Interestingly, the University of Malawi Strategic Plan attributed the manpower supply friction which existed in the country to the "lack of tracer studies" and "needs analysis" by the University of Malawi. This was highlighted as a weakness which also prevented access to higher education.

In contradiction to the Director of Planning, who was concerned with the death of manpower surveys, the Statement of Development Policies (1971-1980) stated that aside from the benefit of the results of the manpower survey in determining employer needs "consideration of Malawi's development policies and targets in the general economic sphere enabled a fairly clear picture of Malawi's manpower needs". Other sentiments emphasising the mismatch of offered courses and employer needs were most clearly expressed in the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Mgov, 2002): "There is also lack of skills development due to inappropriate education curricula at all levels of education". The policy singled out the possible positive outcomes if the curriculum was improved. It noted: "...for people to become active players in poverty reduction there is need for the development of relevant competence based curricula at all levels of education including post-secondary levels".

The Dean of Education of Chancellor College reported that "the main challenging thing is for us in the universities to tailor our programmes to meet the demand of the country". "The other aspect is that it would appear to me that people are basically teaching what they enjoy teaching not necessarily what is required out there, because seldom do I hear of surveys being done to find out what the labour market is looking for". The University Registrar of the University of Malawi confessed similar sentiments.

Other participants however disputed the claims regarding skills mismatch and especially the mismatch identified from the data, namely the quantitative output of graduates in specific programmes such as teacher training programmes. From the policy documents and interviews, it was evident that training of secondary school teachers is regarded as of prime importance by policy makers in Malawi. In this regard the Statement of Development (1987-1996) strategized that "...the Faculty of Education at University of Malawi recruits the correct mix of students in relation to subject specialisation requirements". Many of the policies and

respondents referred to secondary school teacher training as a priority because it was felt that teachers trained in line with subjects required in secondary schools and that quantitative output of secondary school teachers by universities was key to a successful secondary school expansion programme.

One respondent from the Ministry of Education – The Director of Budget in the Planning Unit was quoted as saying: “In our case we told the universities how many education students they should enrol to teach in secondary schools, I remember we gave them the teacher requirements per subject in secondary schools”. Yet some policy makers thought that not enough was being done by government to monitor and strategise the production of teachers to further the best interests of the nation. This was exemplified by the University Registrar who said: “You would have thought that ordinarily with the escalation of secondary school expansion you would think that the priority within the public universities would be to push government to produce so many teachers and pump resources to do that but that does not come out strong”.

Although the Ministry of Education has a vested interest in the expected output of graduates for the education sector they are not singularly in charge of the situation. There was a sense of uncertainty on their ability to effectively monitor the situation in the universities. The Director of Budget within the Ministry of Education Planning Unit reported about the status of the fora that used to coordinate graduate output expectations between the universities, Ministries of Finance and Education, including the Department of Human Resources, stating that “the meetings have been rare these days”. While the Director of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education acknowledged the role his office was mandated to do, i.e. the oversight of university enrolments and graduate output, he however felt that the Ministry of Education had not done very well in that regard. “We should be able to determine how many students they should be able to produce and in which subject area, currently we have a shortage of science and maths teachers, I think it is our responsibility to tell the universities to produce those teachers”.

The suggestions here are to be interpreted within the context of access where students are turned off because of the lack of relevant and marketable programmes. Perceptions from the employers point of view is that, with a few exceptions, the programmes at the University of Malawi are “incompatible” and in a state of “discord” with the skills required in the industry.

4.4.1.5 Issues on equitable access

The role played by individual students through the decisions they make in influencing outcomes of access is outlined clearly by Heller (2001). What is also immediately clear and a key aspect is whether other social and formal structures such as policies prohibit or encourage enrolment of students from underprivileged, marginalised groups including the disabled in any system. An analysis of the drive to encourage equitable access in the policies addresses that question. In this study the consideration of access to higher education by disadvantaged groups was an evolving issue. Seven groups of educationally disadvantaged student groups were acknowledged in the various governmental policies under study. The seven groups were: women, special needs students, geographical (regional/district) access disparities, low socio-economic status, students from rural backgrounds, orphans and the needy.

Considerations of equity and access to higher education in the Malawian context have been an increasing focus of attention by all education stakeholders since 1984. “I think people in general are not happy with the gender disparity because right now female participation is 40%,” the Dean of Education reported. Gomile-Chidyaonga (2003) writes that in view of such concerns a policy was introduced at the University of Malawi to include and encourage the enrolment of girls by introducing a quota system which entailed relaxing the requisite entry points from 30 to 36 for girls.

The University Registrar reported during the interview that the University of Malawi had given thought to some other access disparities existing in the country. “Council began to think along the lines that, whilst the national cake is still small, if nothing is done about changing the current situation then you would have the same areas that have been documented in benefiting from higher education continue to do so,” said the University Registrar who is also a member of Council. During the field study there was a new quota system titled ‘equitable access’ which would be applied when selecting students to all public tertiary institutions.

In the new system implied each district would each be guaranteed ten places for qualified students. Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzimba and Zomba districts would be classified into two zones namely urban and rural districts with each zone or category being guaranteed ten places. The balance of the available places would be distributed on the basis of merit according to population ratios of district of origin. The policy further stipulated that districts

that could not contribute the guaranteed required minimum of ten qualified candidates would have the remaining places put into the general pool to be redistributed to other districts. This redistribution would be based on the equity system according to the population ratios of the districts concerned.

From the 1960s through to the early 1990s selection into schools and university was governed by a similar district-based quota system intended to develop national cohesion by preventing the dominance of one particular region. For complex historical, cultural and geographical reasons, the northern region had longer and more deeply rooted traditions of educational interest and achievements than the rest of the population (Michael, 1978). The newly introduced quota system, which was designed to be implemented in 2009, would be different from the previous system in that apart from the first ten students who would be selected from each district based on the quota system of selection, the rest of the students would be offered university places based on straight merit regardless of the district where they come from.

Ideological contestations related to the policy are many, some of which were echoed by the Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi when he stated

“that has been the debate in the system that when someone writes an exam or indicates that they are from district X... that may not be quite correct because their mother may come from a different district or their father may come from a different district. Or they may actually have been staying where they are staying for so long when in fact they come from elsewhere”.

The quota system has been highly contested within Malawi especially in the press and judicial courts. The major concerns relating to the policy were regarding defining students based on the concept of ‘district of origin’ or for instance, if the new policy meant replacing qualified students with unqualified ones. The principle of admitting students using this concept was particularly difficult in view of the absence of birth certificates or a similar kind of identification in Malawi. Another challenge was the question of intermarriages of parents between diverse regional or district and sometimes ethnic boundaries.

During data collection there was a growing sense of sensitivity during discussion of this ‘quota system’ policy as it is a highly contested and topical issue and one that brings up tribal and ethnicity issues. When asked to comment about the debates surrounding the recently

introduced policy, the Director of Higher Education in the Ministry of education responded “That one, I can comment with the tape off because I would not want to comment on that now”. Despite his reluctance to join the debate on the new policy he nevertheless confirmed that it was his considered opinion that “government is making efforts to ensure that marginalised communities are taken on board and that the quota system was a deliberate effort to ensure that marginalised communities do take part in higher education”.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi aptly summed up the concern “that if district of residence will be seen to be more meaningful than district of origin, the results could be that we will not fully address the issue of widening access across district of origin lines” which was the original disparity concern. The intention to develop a policy to include the disadvantaged communities was very important to the University of Malawi. In the University of Malawi Strategic Plan (UNIMA, 2004), one of the strategic objectives for the period 2004-2010 was to “develop a policy on admission of the disadvantaged”. Although the policy document recognised “improving access to disadvantaged groups” in general terms, it rightly noted that this policy “was being met with resistance in certain quarters”. Similarly the Chairperson of University of Malawi Council expressed his observations on the merits of the policy to include students from marginalised districts and regions when he said, “we also included the quota system so that the balancing [of access] should be spatial”. He finally concluded “we cannot educate one village and one corner of Malawi and leave the rest”.

Higher education systems all over the world are facing student demographic challenges in the general character of the students admitted into their schooling systems. Malawi’s higher education system faces similar challenges as it tries to regularise imbalances in the type of students it admits in view of inequitable access – students from the Northern region of the country having an upper hand when entering higher education institutions. The policy of equitable access to education along district lines is not a new development in the history of Malawi. Although the policy was challenged in court in 1994 at the dawn of democracy, it remained the policy which defined selection to secondary schools and university education for much of the period under one party rule which lasted from 1964 to 1994.

A further analysis of this distinct educational advantage of populations of the Northern region of Malawi is therefore required because it is difficult to find strong evidence for inequalities favouring a specific region at the level of this study. The initial perspective of the issue

however provides a sense of the complexity inherent in the situation. Both institutional and national policies consider admission of the disadvantaged essential. The Policy Investment Framework (PIF) (Mgov, 2002) recognised that: “...greater concern with social equity which necessitates more attention to poverty alleviation issues and the reduction of gender and other types of social and regional disparities” a necessary priority in education.

One aspect of inequitable access that the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper aimed at improving was gender equity with roughly 30% of intake reserved for girls and this quota to be increased to 50% by 2012. The policy also noted in order to increase this access it was necessary to “include scholarship schemes for girls and the needy students”.

4.4.1.6 Private university establishment

For a long time, almost 30 years since independence in 1964, the political landscape in Malawi and the higher education sector in particular favoured public universities and the country was more of a one-public-university state. There were however subsequent initiatives designed to change this position. The onset of the multiparty system of government in 1994 happened to coincide with the introduction of a second public university and the emergence of private universities as documented below.

It is virtually not possible to isolate the reasons for the lengthy ban of private universities in Malawi before 1994 but quality concerns were the main justification. Subsequently however, new regulations and policies allowing the introduction of private universities have been passed. One such policy statement in support of the establishment of private universities is the Policy Investment Framework 1995-2001 (MoE, 1995) which stated that: “To enhance access, the government will facilitate the establishment of private institutions of higher learning”. An analysis of earlier policy documents such as the Second Education Development Plan (1984-1994) and Statement of Development Policies (1971-1980; 1986) however signals that the public university sector and the University of Malawi took centre stage. The Second Education Development Plan singles out this idea that the University of Malawi is the sole partner of government in the provision of higher education and it categorically stated that:

“The University of Malawi and the Office of Higher and Further Education (for the government) will explore and establish ways and means to implement a scheme

whereby the University will grant degrees/diplomas/certificates to students studying in programmes at non-university institutions”.

Some of the participants interviewed expressed anxiety because the emergence of private universities is a recent development in the higher education sector in Malawi. The participants expressed fear that the private universities in Malawi may not complement the efforts of government. The University Registrar of the University of Malawi drew parallels with the Korean model where government and private universities had complemented efforts. He expounded on the state-private university linkage when he said, “they allowed private universities to emerge but the legislation was going to be that for them to operate, private universities will have to teach what government is not teaching, then those that would want to benefit from these and have the financial clout to pay can go there and benefit. What happened was that both systems worked side by side and indeed they complemented the priority areas to the level whereby South Korea is what it is now”.

In a related development, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of a private university, the Catholic University of Malawi which was established in 2006, described the relationship of his university with Government as “cordial”. Other than Government sending a handful of staff to undergo further training at the private university, the Deputy Vice Chancellor indicated that there was no formal relationship of any sort that existed between the two entities. The revelation was seen against a backdrop of private-public universities partnerships taking place on the African continent, for instance in Kenya. These partnerships take various forms but include developing and sustaining partnerships with public universities to meet the demands of learners in curriculum development, teaching, research and internship as expounded by Mwiria *et al* (2007).

Following the post-1994 mushrooming of private universities, the government reacted in part to ensure that there was a mechanism for regulation of private universities. The formulation of a higher education bill was one such strategy which aimed at facilitating the establishment of a Council for Higher Education. As the Chairman of Council of the University of Malawi remarked: “Government had seen that in other cases funny higher education institutions pop up. They were concerned about the quality of education so much so that they wanted a Council to be established which will oversee all these quality issues”. Similarly, the Dean of Education who was involved in formulating the higher education bill reflected the thinking of

government stating that “in the absence of some yardsticks... in the absence of standards to follow, it became very urgent for the Ministry of Education to say we need to have a body that will have the authority to help in controlling quality”.

The Government’s vision in recognising the role that private universities could play in fostering higher education access clearly played a major part in establishing the kind of protective institutional mandate required to provide a secure environment for the flourishing of private universities. The context in which the comments above are to be interpreted is influenced strongly by assumptions derived from a comment made by the Deputy Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University of Malawi. According to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Catholic University intended as far back as 1964 to establish a university in Malawi. Such an intention was not approved by the one party system of government that spanned from 1964 to 1994. The result was that establishment of private universities was non-existent during the 30-year period which was characterised by the dominance of one public university, the University of Malawi.

In this sense the post-1994 higher education policies which encouraged establishment of private universities seem to have played a pivotal role in furthering the aim of providing the student with a choice of an institution. In agreement with this thinking the Director of Higher Education commented on an initiative by the Ministry of Education that “the private universities are actually complementing government efforts in the provision of higher education and we cannot leave them behind”. He went on to say that: “You know even when we are working here on what we are calling the Higher Education Technical Working Group we have incorporated these private universities” and also that “in terms of the Catholic University of Malawi, government put up infrastructure and left them to use”.

There were three accredited private universities during the study period, namely the Catholic University of Malawi in Chiradzulu in the Southern region of the country, Share world Open University also based in the Southern region, and the Livingstonia University in the Northern region. Private universities enrol 12% of the total university enrolment in Malawi while Mzuzu and University of Malawi universities enrol the remaining 88%. Enrolments in private universities are small compared to public universities enrolments at this stage as they enrol five out of 18 fields of study currently being offered in Malawi such as Education,

Humanities, Commerce, Developmental Studies and ICT (World Bank, 2008). Below is an illustration of the private university enrolment trend for the six year period.

Table 4.6: Six-year period enrolment trends - accredited private universities: 2003- 2008

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Catholic University	*	*	*	102	246	363
Livingstonia University	44	76	124	166	171	162
Shareworld University	581	653	523	599	248	244

*Not yet established

Sources: Catholic University of Malawi, Livingstonia University, ShareWorld University, 2011

Analysing the private universities enrolments presented in Table 4.5 in the context of expanding access, it can be argued that private universities cannot adequately address the challenges of limited access. The private universities have afforded students with opportunity of institutional choice but have not addressed the need to adequately expand enrolments and meet excess demand in line with identified national needs.

B. How do government and public universities in Malawi govern and plan for enrolments within the framework of state-university linkages?

The section below will present the results of the study directly linked to the research question re-stated above.

4.4.2 Theme 2: State-university linkage framework

Enrolment planning and coordination were categorised as linked categories based on the second-order theme of *state-university linkages*.

Government normally provides the framework that guides enrolment planning and coordination between Ministry of Education and universities (Tapper *et al*, 2005; Bunting *et*

al, 2005). The important guiding role played by centralised systems/structures of enrolment planning is not only effective but also efficient as suggested by the authors. The Ministry of Education was the equivalent of such a centralised body and was tasked with regulation of policy matters.

What is evident from the narratives produced by participants in the study however is that there were no assessments made of any positive or negative influence perceived to have arisen from a decentralised approach of enrolment governance that was evidenced in the system under study. Apart from that, data collected from respondents indicated that, in Malawi, initiating the development of new fields of study was the preserve of public universities although there was a legitimate expectation that the Ministry of Education had the instrumental role to raise the overall level of education attainment and reduction of disparity. This was apparent from the sentiments expressed by the Director of Higher Education when asked about the specific influence government had on the initiation of programmes:

“Right now, it is more the universities doing it rather than the universities responding to government’s requirements. Some of the programmes are initiated by the Ministry of Education, like the MED programme, because we are lacking policy and planning leadership skills, but the majority are initiated by the universities themselves”.

It is likely that since centralised enrolment planning fora were found to be rare and almost non-existent on a national scale then government as overseer of access policy may not be fully in charge of regulating enrolments taking place within the universities. This was evidenced when the Director of Higher education remarked that: “There was some sort of laxity, following up has not been excellent, understandably because we did not have a directorate of higher education in the Ministry and I do not think we have it because we are in the process of establishing it”. Some respondents at the Ministry of Education concurred and spoke about “such meetings” to plan enrolments “being rare” and on *ad hoc* basis and that “the University should have been the driver not government”. When probed about “what plans government had for universities as far as enrolment planning was concerned”, respondents reported that it was Governments’ thinking that universities should be autonomous.

The above line of thought was however contradicted in policies such as the National Education Sector Plan (2008) which notes: “The identified challenges under higher education are mainly attributable to restrictive statutory prescriptions, the public policy vacuum and the opaque relationship with government. These challenges can be further split as follows - weaknesses and deficiencies in university management system and such managerial weaknesses which in turn affect access, equity and other issues”. The Director of Planning in the Ministry of Education further varied the initial perception by government that there is an “opaque relationship” with universities and he explained Government’s position by describing his viewpoint of the University of Malawi. He mentioned that he perceived the University of Malawi’s dependence on government as “a child looking to a mother”.

Most participants described the state-university linkages as concerning issues of finance and budgeting alone. These regular linkages were usually based on funding needs alone. “When universities are ready with budget estimates... we meet them, we discuss and agree, strategise how we should meet treasury”, the Director of Budget in the Ministry of Education reported. “It is mostly according to availability, I don’t think funding is tied to enrolment as such”. This lack of coordinated enrolment planning and coordination within the state-university linkages had a correlative effect within the universities. Participants from the University of Malawi, when asked how they plan for enrolments, reported that this function was done within the University of Malawi by the University Council as an advisory body. The involvement of Council in the institutional enrolment planning arose from a contractual obligation. However, there was a perceived lack of a clear sense of direction as expressed in the following quote from the University Registrar detailing his sense of loss at the effect the mismatch of University of Malawi programmes was having with the market. He reported that “...there was need for a synergy between government and us the public universities” and that “seldom were there surveys (by government) conducted to find out what skills the labour market is looking for”.

Such sentiments coupled with the backdrop of the literature highlighted in chapter two, echoed the need for the government to do much more in ensuring the provision of a structured sense of direction for higher education access.

In contradiction to the picture of piecemeal oversight depicted above, there were some different perceptions. This is best reflected by a statement by the Director of Higher

Education: “For example Chancellor College is supposed to have 50% education students because government built extra hostels for education students so that half of the students should be education students. The university is complying with that because this year there were 49.9% admitted and there was a shortage of 3 students and that was an insignificant deficit”.

Records highlighting the admission procedures at the University of Malawi show that the number of students to be admitted at the University of Malawi is determined by the available bed space at each college. The bed space capacity is arrived at and determined by the number of students who graduate, get withdrawn and takes into consideration those who repeat. There is a university admissions board in the University of Malawi known as the Selection Committee. This committee is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor who delegates to the Pro Vice Chancellor and is comprised of College Principals, College Registrars and all Deans of Faculty. There are existing restrictions preventing some students from being selected to attend the University of Malawi including outdated qualifications (a school leaving certificate needs to be obtained within the three previous years before application to the university), and candidates who have been previously withdrawn from the university or other comparable public institutions are not eligible for admission (Chinombo, 2011:1). The section below will present the categories related to the third research objective.

c. What effect do policy actors have on access and their role in access policy change?

The third theme on the role of policy actors was isolated and below is a presentation of data directly linked to the above research question.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Role of policy actors

The third order theme is the role of policy actors. The theme was broken down into role of supranational bodies and role of local policy actors. Responses such as: “...the World Bank put forward a recommendation to say you countries that are developing you need to develop the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper” and “A special Law Commission was set up to review the Higher Education ACT for the past years with funding from DFID and European Union” were easy to analyse and induce as issues related to the role of policy actors. Both DFID’s and European Union’s interest in the Education Act was sparked by the realisation that the ACT was outdated at the time. The primary reason for their support was simply to facilitate the process and not necessarily to influence ideas that went into the Act. When asked whether

the donors had any influence in what went into the policies, participants reported similar sentiments that the content of the policies “were purely Malawian Government, DFID had nothing to do with what went into the Act” and “the specific goals to the policies were actually country-led”. Further, organisations such as the World Bank, through the Education Sector Support Project, contributed in some ways to the development of higher education access by the construction of additional teaching infrastructure such as lecture theatres at the University of Malawi and lecture theatres and laboratories at Mzuzu University (Mughandira, 2011; 1). The other area that the World Bank has influenced higher education access is through the provision of knowledge to inform access policy by initiating and funding the Education Country Status Report which highlights the access status of various education sectors, including higher education.

These sentiments were also mentioned by the Director of Higher Education when he isolated the idea that “their role was simply to fund because they too, I think, were of the opinion that it was a bit old just as government looked at it”. This led to the belief that the role of supranational policy actors was limited to the funding role of the process of the formulation rather than content of the policies.

The picture outlined in earlier policy documents, such as the Statement of Development Policies (1987-1996), acknowledged the role that the international community played in major national policies, including education. “Countries such as Malawi are subject to many influences, internal and external, and in this situation it is important that the Government has clear and consistent positions on a wide range of policies” (OPC; 1). The other evidence was the document’s mention of “the realisation of the major economic objectives contained in the first Statement of Development Policies was made possible, to a large extent, by the co-operation of not only government but the donor community as well”.

The hands-off approach taken by international agencies in terms of the influence on the content of policies is apparent in the more recent policies such as the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (2006-2011), which suggested that “preparation of the MGDS has been country-led and owned, therefore making it a document for the nation”.

The perceived role played in policy creation by policy actors was described by the Principal Economist, a liaison Policy Officer between Ministry of Education and Higher Education Institutions. He interprets the overriding policy document of Government, that is, the

constitution. He explained that the statements in the constitution confined the role of Government and limited the extent to which government was obliged to provide education. His interpretation of the constitution was that government was obliged to provide only basic education. The Director of Planning in the Ministry of Education, who had facilitated formulation of some major national policies, said their role to effect any changes was limited and it was not necessary for policy actors to intervene as he perceived that seepage of students during the secondary school to higher education transition stage was normal:

“I will put it this way: You are a hundred people who want to cross a river and the boat can only take twenty of them. The simple analysis will be survival of the fittest. He who gets into the boat first crosses. Here is another situation: you have created a hurdle. He who jumps here will score and that’s the situation that we are in... You still have to allow the system to flow and have to tap it as it moves. The more we go with the education system the more it seeps out and that is normal to me... Within education there is also survival of the fittest... without having me to interfere”.

The results also reveal that the University of Malawi has external support in terms of needy students. The University Finance Officer of the University of Malawi commented on this, particularly as regards the needy.

“You know, the loan scheme is no longer a UNIMA baby, it is under the Ministry of Education but of course we started administering it here initially. It was set up to be a mechanism for assisting needy students. When the financial contribution was introduced there were feelings that maybe some students who were needy might not be able to raise that money and therefore they might be unable to come to college because of lack of resources. So the World Bank provided some money that time to set up the loan scheme. It was supposed to be a revolving fund in order to assist those who were unable to raise money for the financial contribution.”

Needless to say that the role of higher education as discussed by the participants reflects the meritocratic role of higher education which is a contradiction of the public interest role. The latter highlights higher education for its role in the unlocking of potential at all levels of society, creating a pool of highly trained individuals nationally, with an emphasis on humanity subjects that offer long-term value to society, and the provision for the free and open discussion of ideas and values (World Bank, 2000).

4.5 Summary

Chapter four presented the data that was collected pertaining to issues related to the governance of access in Malawi. The governance of higher education access was significantly influenced by the structure of the public universities and private universities, policy actors, and the planning function of the Ministry of Education. The universities have implemented programmes such as the non-residential student programmes in order to open up university education. Nevertheless, there are also challenges that were identified in the system especially those related to labour supply challenges reflecting the vagaries of planning within the universities and the Ministry of Education.



CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five discusses the findings and presents conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data. The findings of the main research question are appraised vis-à-vis implications for access to higher education in Malawi. Implications of the findings, the contribution of this study and finally recommendations for further research on the governance of access with emphasis on systems with low participation rates are discussed.

5.2 Findings

This research was motivated by the goal of investigating why Malawi has a low higher education participation rate of 0.4%. The results of this investigation allowed an understanding as to why there is limited capacity of higher education institutions which in turn prevents the enrolment of as many students as possible in need of a university level education in Malawi. The investigation was not limited to gaining further understanding of the policies and carrying capacity of the institutions but also an exploration of existing coordination and authority mechanisms. Thus research objectives formulated to advance the investigation were threefold:

- How can access policies (1984 to 2008) and their outcomes in Malawi be conceptualized and explained?
- How do government and public universities in Malawi govern and plan for enrolments within the state-university linkages framework?
- What effect do policy actors have on higher education access and their role in access policy change?

Relationships between participation rates, access policies and the governance of access as defined in the overall research question were investigated.

These relationships were evaluated by analysing the interview data and policy documents. After examining the research results, several conclusive findings are evident.

Findings associated with the first order relationship of the main research question, that is, *mode of access governance influences participation* suggest that the government has changed its style of governance quite considerably over time, in the way it has coordinated

enrolments; specifically in regards the coordination of the mix of programmes that should be offered by universities. Results of this analysis associated with this relationship confirm that mode of governance is significantly associated with participation. While participation is a function of mode of governance, within the state-institutional framework, the results suggest that the style of governance is not fully institutionally directed nor is it typically state-steering. This was illustrated by the finding in the previous chapter that the system under study leaned towards a decentralised approach of enrolment governance whereby, for instance, programmes of study were initiated at the public university's will and not necessarily in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education based on the needs of the labour market. The conclusive finding is that the style being practised was rather a mixture of institutional directed and piecemeal consensus between state and institution mode of governing enrolments.

The Statement of Development Policies (1971-1980) spelt out the benefits of conducting manpower surveys as an invaluable aid in planning the size and kind of educational expansion needed (OPC, 1971). Other than the defined benefits, the usefulness of the manpower surveys was contested by what some policies and participants revealed. For example, to some the surveys proved to be beneficial for the advancement of the right mix of offered programmes at the university in the 1960s to 1980s in Malawi and that the tool was the only possible solution and instrument for aiding enrolment planning during the early 1990s. Unless there is a clear sense of the solutions to the current manpower planning scenario, debates will continue on the usefulness of the tool as far as enrolment governance is concerned.

Bunting *et al* (2005) show that consensus building between the state and institution is beneficial to the achievement of the desired expansion of higher education. Nur-Awaleh & Mtegha (2005) suggest however that the government of Malawi should refrain from interfering or influencing the admission function. The conclusion of this study is that government should take an active role in the planning of enrolments. This recommendation is in contradiction with the conclusion of the study by Nur-Awaleh & Mtegha (2005) who maintained that the admission function at the University of Malawi should be safeguarded and that the Government should adopt a hands-off approach to ensure independence of the public universities. Furthermore, Trow (1973) suggests that size of a higher education system

is also dependent on how it is moderated by those who govern it. From that perspective, the influence of the state had to be examined.

In the literature reviewed related to governance and planning of enrolments within the state-university linkages framework, there is a consistent pattern that has been observed. The few studies that have examined this relationship, other than the present study, have found some level of links between systems with low participation rates and decentralized planning of enrolments and on the other hand, some association with growth in student numbers with centralised planning of enrolments. For example Kaiser and Vossensteyn (2005) showed that higher education institutions do not use the decentralized enrolment system to the fullest extent in cases where universities make autonomous decisions with respect to enrolments as a result of capacity restrictions and other restrictions related to the ability to pay tuition etc. In a similar study Aamodt and Kyvik (2005) found a traditional way of explaining expansion stating that when there is demand and needs in the labour market, the government responds by deciding on the expansion of the higher education system and allocate the necessary funds. In other words, the state sets the pace of expansion irrespective of the fact that it may not be the labour market alone prompting Government to react.

After an analysis of the data, it appeared that the programmatic access hinted at in Heller (2001) might be a good starting point in terms of further analysis. The concern about current university programmes being irrelevant to existing market needs as expressed by respondents from the study can also be interpreted as a warning about access as Heller (2001) elaborates on in the context of different viewpoints of higher education access. The concept of availability of suitable programmes at the university was viewed by Heller (2001) as a crucial element to achieving student access. He further espoused the position by arguing that programmatic accessibility implies “a condition if the academic programme that the student wants is available”. Heller thus argues for a direct relationship between the above aspect of a university and its capacity to fully or adequately provide for programmes that students require.

The perspective offered on the effect of the cited relationship provides revealing insights into the functionality of the system when similar mismatches are identified and echoed by employers. The mismatches are between the expectations of qualification holders and the expectations of employers. According to a report by Thomas *et al* (2007) there is a clear view

from employers that graduates from the University of Malawi do not match their expectations. In many respects the reasons for this mismatch are explained by the lack of dialogue between the university and employers. In the same report it is argued that existing links between the higher education community and employers in Malawi are weak. In a number of respects these links are so weak that opportunities are being lost for higher education to contribute effectively to the achievement of international development targets. For instance, there are concerns around perceived high levels of unemployment following graduation in a range of subjects with the notable exceptions of medicine and nursing.

As far as systems with low participation rates are concerned, no previous studies have looked at the effects that a decentralized system of planning enrolments may have on systems with low participation rates. This study makes a contribution to the field of higher education studies by providing strong support for such a link. This study investigated the nature of enrolment governance within the state-university linkages framework by assessing whether enrolment was coordinated by the state or was carried out within the university as an autonomous function or even as a consensus between the state and the institution. It may therefore be relevant for future studies to look not just at the composite impact of the nature of enrolment governance, but also at the impact of the various mechanisms of state intervention or steering mechanisms instituted and to gain an understanding into the process through which these mechanism influence enrolments. This suggests that future studies should probe deeper and not only look at the relationship between these two variables, but specifically at the mechanism that is behind this relationship. Of particular interest would be to establish how the nature of the enrolment planning vis-à-vis state intervention, steering or coercion mechanisms play a role and impact on size of enrolment.

There are major issues that make the governance of access analysis appear complicated when compared to what the literature outlines on a similar topic. The presented data in the previous chapter highlighted the effects, manpower planning processes or the lack of it had on the labour market in the system under study. It is against this perspective that it appears that conception of programmatic access by Heller (2001) was too simplistic to capture the complexity of the networked nature of university programmes to the market. The interrelatedness of influences outlined in the analysis, almost by implication includes insight into the dynamic and interrelated functioning of the system as a whole. To expound this factor further, it is believed that there is a mismatch between offered courses and needs in the

labour market in Malawi. After students graduate from university, the career options are usually quite limited in relation to the programmes studied. This is further compounded when there are a lot more industries who find it hard to find employees from the same university with the right kind of qualifications. As already highlighted, this status quo is an issue of concern to policy makers.

The lack of structured planning or monitoring function alluded to in the previous chapter contrasts with what has been shown in the literature. Parry, 2005 cited in Tapper (2005) shows monitoring systems of the admission arrangements in the UK system: “the periodic monitoring of the admission arrangements is conducted jointly by the funding councils with the same rules applied to all higher education institutions establishments in the UK”. The author details the differing functions given to the state and the university by further pointing out that “the decision about which individual to admit is a matter for the institution”.

On the other hand, the metaphors employed in the narratives by the Principal Economist and the Director of Planning related to how these interviewed policy actors viewed access to higher education reinforces the theoretical framework advanced by Ball (1990), that in a policy study, investigation of the ideological system should be considered in order to take into account the way education policy is conceived and discussed. This is consistent with the ideas that Ball (1990) advanced regarding the role of influential groups in the contribution towards the funding of education.

Heller’s (2001) work, which among other factors highlights the importance of the social or institutional support through policies, requires some interrogation from the perspective of the theme: “factors constraining access to higher education”. Although, the University of Malawi’s policies encouraged the steady expansion and enrolment of students it should be noted that there were barriers to access. The University of Malawi experienced difficulties in admitting as many students as possible because of the limited nature of teaching and learning facilities existing within the university. The limitation of facilities arises from historical reasons such as government’s plans to produce a small number of university graduates. Another factor, as highlighted earlier, is the limitation of funding from government which hinders expansion of these facilities.

Although access policies seem to remove barriers to access in this case, the limitation of facilities appears not to satisfy Heller’s criteria for access. Hence the lack facilities, which in

effect is related to underfunding, evolves into a separate category which is best perceived through the lens of the coordination instruments within the state-university linkages of the access-policy-governance framework.

On the other hand, the policy to increase access along district lines faces various challenges. It should be noted that in the present situation it is not clear whether the current policy will meaningfully redress imbalance between districts given that the terminology of *district of origin* allows for multiple and maybe vague interpretations as observed by Waetjen (2006).

In Malawi there is clearly an excess demand which the private sector could have taken advantage, however the results demonstrate that Malawi has a shrinking private university sector as determined through the number of students admitted. It has also been observed that there is some level of duplication of programmes offered between the private and public universities entailing that private universities in Malawi are not responding to a better, different nor excess demand (Kruss, 2002; Wei, 2009) but rather that they are responding to the opportunity of affording students a choice of institutions (Heller, 2001).

Governance of access refers to a way of characterising relationships, the style or method by which major players within the higher education sector regulate higher education enrolments or admissions (Susskind, 2009). There are several themes or instruments that have driven the governance of access discourse such as intrusive state intervention, ranging from exhortation and the offer of funding assistance to universities and students; the setting of admission targets; the construction of incentives; onto a more prescriptive stage marked by 'access agreements' etc. (Tapper, 2005; 191). Universities on the other hand may apply a *numerous clausus*⁸ policy which is often determined by national or regional planning decisions based on economic and social factors affecting the whole country, such as supply of staff, quality of facilities and availability of equipment in the universities. Limited enrolments on the other hand may be decided by an individual university and may vary on a yearly basis (Michellotti, 2005). Vinigiani and Saton, 2002 cited in Michellotti, 2005 further posit that limited enrolments are one of the manifestations of university self-government. From the above descriptions, the way access decisions are made and the resultant impact is a good basis for further analysis, whether or not access governance is centralised, decentralised or whether or not some consensus between the state and universities are reached with regard to other

⁸ ("Closed Number" in Latin) It is one of the many methods used to limit the number of students who may study at a university (Oshinsky, 2006)

secondary factors such as the availability of funding etc. A gap was identified in Malawi; this gap related to the theme of state-university linkages framework whereby there were no structures in place for ensuring accountability of access outcomes versus enrolment targets.

The relationship that has been established between the governance of access and participation rates suggests that from a policy and practice perspective, it is vital to examine enrolment governance that surrounds systems with low participation rates. If public universities in systems with low participation rates make exclusive decisions based on size of enrolments for instance then the reality of higher education systems with low participation rates will continue

With regard to the second assumption – the relationship between participation rates and access policies – the results from prior studies are mixed. As Ostermann (2005) note, “...open access policy combined with policies designed purposefully to widen access will play a role in expansion albeit a modest one”. Government policies have been linked to other participation related reforms such as the demand and supply of private education (Oketch, 2009) with people being more likely to access private universities if there are laws encouraging development of private universities. This strategy is in agreement with the framework Breneman, 1995 (cited in Heller, 2001) advanced which encouraged the integration of the ability of policies to enable students have varied choice of institutions where they could access university education. The concept forms a useful point of departure for increasing the availability of institutions including the availability of private universities so that prospective students are accorded this chance from a policy perspective.

Conlon (2006) found that without strategic policy intervention from government, the social divide is likely to get worse when it comes to access to post-secondary education. The results of this study mirror these findings showing that government access policies have a link to participation rates. Open or non-restrictive access policy which, among other things, encourages the establishment of private universities is more likely to encourage higher education access. The findings of this study indicate, as other studies have also done, that the relationship between access policies and participation rates is not necessarily a direct one. This does not mean that the importance of access policies should be ignored. Given that the flexible and open access policies are associated with growth in student numbers accessing

higher education, all efforts should be made to ensure that both governments and universities have good and articulate access policies.

It should be further noted that both the policy review and the personal interviews with policy actors revealed some shortcomings in access policies as a standalone strategy to influence enrolment. A policy goal is only effective when the intended purpose receives additional attention according to Kaiser and Vossensteyn (2005). Using this viewpoint, the intention of policies to increase admission of students in teacher training programmes can only be effective when additional initiatives such as media campaigns and programmes have been developed to encourage more students to choose teacher training as a profession. This is mirrored against teacher training programmes in Germany where according to Kaiser and Vossensteyn (2005) the government additionally initiated image and recruitment campaigns.

In 1999/2000 a campaign was started to promote access to secondary education teacher training programmes in Germany. According to Kaiser and Vossensteyn (2005) multiple programmes were initiated such as the securing of media spots which emphasised the value and fun of the teaching profession in attempts to reverse the perspective that teaching is a tough and boring job. Furthermore, the opportunity of 'side-ways-entry' in 2000 was introduced which entailed that people with a higher education qualification in another sector could enter the teaching profession.

Regardless of whether access policies themselves influence growth of student numbers or not, the concern remains that if universities' or government access policies are constraining or unclear they may increase barriers to student access.

In general, results of this study seem to suggest that access policies, i.e. enrolment targets, have differed quite considerably in terms of the access outcomes. This outcome is based on some findings related to the analysis of the policy documents and interview data. Even though access targets and strategies contained in policy documents differed with access outcomes, (e.g. production of secondary school teachers featuring strongly as a priority of higher education access in policy documents while the University Registrar of the University of Malawi expressed disappointment because he had thought that the situation on the ground differed considerably. He thought that the teacher training priority highlighted in policies is not exactly a major top priority when one observes the enrolment trends of student teachers) this finding could be described as relatively minor.

The expectation of this study was that policy actors who were regularly involved in access policy formulation would play a pivotal role to effect changes in the access policy formulation stage and perception of their role in that regard. This is so because there is considerable support in prior literature that policy actors are more likely to influence policy although, results of this study seem to suggest that the policy actors, apart from setting enrolment targets, had no perceived role to change access patterns. Further, this suggestion seems to apply both for supranational bodies such as the World Bank and DIFD and the national policy actors as a group. This research question however is difficult to answer as the findings relevant to policy actors' role and their role in influencing policy appeared to have developed gradually over time and the results are obscure.

From the perspective of this study and based on the hypothesis that policy actors exert influences during the policy process, the key question is whether training and other support activities of policy actors could make them more aware regarding access and its impacts. This recommendation may lead to their increased motivation for influencing greater access. If this proves to be so, then the idea of training and support programmes may need to be revisited and tailored to encourage greater sensitisation among policy actors regarding the effect higher education participation rates could have on national economies. Meanwhile, from a policy and practice perspective, the findings of this study provide a strong support for the need to continue informing and raising awareness about access policies to policy actors and the general public.

5.3 Summary of findings

Overall, the results of this study highlight a number of complex findings that contribute to a better understanding of higher education access governance. At the broadest level, results seem to confirm that centralised, consensus building and decentralised systems of enrolment planning have varied effects on enrolments in the long term. In particular, this research has found that these differences reveal and are most prominent depending on the types of enrolment governance that exist within the state-university linkages framework.

The findings associated with this study are of particular importance as they are based on a study in a higher education system associated with low participation rates. This result facilitates the understanding of how participation rates or its composition can be generated since most studies on access inform us on various variables of access policies such as social class, gender, ethnicity, schooling, mature student participation and disability. Such debates

do not contribute to knowledge on how access reforms should be approached. In summary, the findings of this thesis are important as they may help to both support and extend research related to access governance.

Malawi's low higher education participation rate status is an issue of concern and one that requires continuous oversight by a centralised regulatory approach or some form of consensus between the state and institutions. In **Chapter four**, available data on this role by the state primarily reflects an extreme hands-off approach rather than the state playing the overseer role. However, while not being the principal cause of the low participation rate, the effect of government oversight warrants reconsideration in terms of the enrolment governance style observed in the system under study. The state-institution linkage framework was found to have a strong impact on size of enrolments and other variables such as equity considerations versus allocation of funding from the state to the university.

5.4 Future research direction

The advantages of a study such as this one focusing on the governance of access lie in the ease of comparative analyses between countries. A natural extension of this study would be to apply each of this study's three study objectives to other countries' higher education systems. This would allow the assessment of the potential contribution of decentralised enrolment planning versus government oversight of the enrolment function to size and compositions of higher education systems, its funding allocations and attainment of equitable access within and between countries.

5.5 Conclusion

The study began with the question "What is the relationship between participation rates, access policies and the governance of access?" In the case of Malawi, the answer has been two-fold. Firstly, though the participation rate for Malawi is among the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa, the country is in the midst of a dramatic higher education transition. Despite considerable higher education governance difficulties, higher education enrolment growth has been increasing in the last decade. In the case of access policies, the policies of Malawi had developed to become more open and embracing hence giving more and more students a wider choice between institutions. In the final analysis, this finding provides strong evidence that adoption of sound policies is an important determinant of higher education growth and suggests that formulation of sound access policies for higher education has been a central feature in the drive towards the improvement of higher education access.

The study most notably addressed three areas that have hitherto received little research attention in the access governance literature: (a) the importance of enrolment planning structures in relation to enrolment governance, (b) the development of participation rates in relation to how access is governed and (c) the linkage between government and universities in governing access. In all these three areas, this study produced findings that appear to advance our understanding of access governance and may therefore be of interest to higher education researchers and practitioners.

The study revealed that participation rates reflect among other things, the capacity of the institution and the policies guiding access. There were significant differences in access outcomes in Malawi from the early 1980s to the 1990s through to the late 2000s when there was some level of state-university consensus building mode of enrolment planning through the manpower surveys process. The result was that after the abandonment of the manpower surveys, there was a noticeable mismatch of offered courses with what the labour market required and at the same time reduction of desirability of offered courses demonstrating that an extent of state oversight appears to be a prerequisite to regular functioning of a system. This is consistent with earlier research within the access-policy-governance framework advanced by Tapper (2005), Ball (1990), Bunting *et al* (2005) and Clark (1983) and may speak to the growing institutional directed (autonomous) mode of enrolment governance that was prevalent in the system under study. Those working in the higher education system, including Ministry of Education personnel and universities, should therefore begin serious introspection into how governance may be feeding into access.

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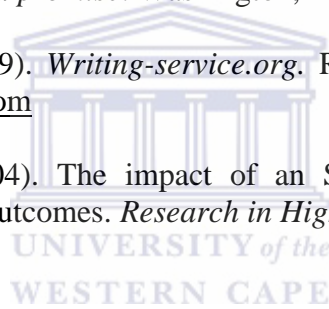
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Appendix A

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

University of the Western
Cape
Private Bag X17, Bellville,
7535
Tel: +27 (0) 21 959 2649 /
3888
Fax: +27 (0) 21 959 2647
Email: gouma@uwc.ac.za
Website: www.uwc.ac.za

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH (NITA CHIVWARA)

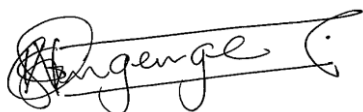
NITA CHIVWARA, student number 2860520 is a fully registered student of the University of the Western Cape. She is enrolled in the NORAD-sponsored Master of Education (Higher Education Studies) programme, which is a collaborative programme involving the University of the Western Cape, University of Oslo (Norway), Makerere University (Uganda) and the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET).

Mrs. Chivwara's research proposal was recently approved by the Faculty of Education's Higher Degrees Committee, and I am therefore writing to kindly request that you grant her permission and support to collect data for her dissertation research. I wish to assure you that the data to be collected shall be utilised strictly for the study and utmost confidentiality and other ethical considerations shall be adhered to as well.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the following email address: gouma@uwc.ac.za or telephone no. +27(0)21 763-7100

Thank you.

Yours sincerely



Dr Gerald W. Ouma

Co-ordinator, Master of Education (Higher Education Studies) programme

Telegrams: MINED LILONGWE
Telephone: +265 1 789422
Fax: +265 1 788064/164

Communications should be addressed to:
The Secretary for Education



In reply please quote No.....

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
PRIVATE BAG 328
CAPITAL CITY
LILONGWE 3
MALAWI

DP2/134/10

10th October 2008

Nita Chivwara
Centre for Study of Higher Education
University of Western Cape
Private Bag x17
Bellville 7535
South Africa

**Re: Permission to Collect Data on Higher Education, October
2008 – March 2009**



I write to inform you that you have been granted permission to collect data on Higher Education sector in Malawi, from October 2008 – March 2009.

It is my hope that the relevant departments will render the necessary assistance you may require. Good luck in your studies.

A.F. Kamlongera (PhD)
For: Secretary for Education, Science and Technology



UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
University Office

TELEPHONE: 526 622
TELEGRAM: UNIVERSITY ZOMBA
FAX: (265) 524 760/297/031
E-Mail: uniregistrar@unima.mw

UNIVERSITY OFFICE
P.O Box 278
ZOMBA
MALAWI

Our Ref: 1/12/3/12/1

27th April, 2009

Centre for the Study of Higher Education
University of the Western Cape
Private bag X17, Bellville 7535
South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: MASTER OF EDUCATION (HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES) -
STUDENT NITA CHIVWARA**

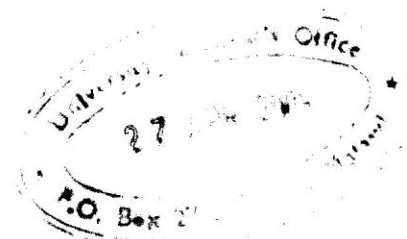
This is to confirm that Mrs Nita Chivwara a Master of Education (Higher Education Studies) student at your University was given permission to conduct her study and collect data from the University of Malawi.

I trust that this information is sufficient for the required purpose.

Yours faithfully

Linda Saka

Linda Saka (Mrs)
FOR/UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR



Appendix B: Key informants interview guide(s)

Guide 1

Introduction

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is **Nita Chivwara** and I would like to talk to you about your experiences in higher education policy making, interaction and implementation including governance of higher education in general. Specifically, the research is looking at higher education participation in this country.

The interview should take less than an hour. I would like to request your permission to tape record your session because I do not want to miss any of your comments. All responses will only be used for this research. Remember, you do not have to talk about anything you do not want to and you may end the interview at any time.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

Interviewee _____

Witness _____

Date _____



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Questions

Guide 2

1. Could you describe any channel of communication/interaction between government and the university through which funding of the University is discussed? Please explain the nature of the forum?
2. What strategy does government use to fund the University?
3. What are government's priorities (related to university functions) for financing the university?
4. Could you explain if these priorities changed since the establishment of the university?
5. Has there been financial support/programme specifically aimed at increasing student enrolment? Elaborate your answer?
6. Was there any criterion used to identify the students for the support?
7. According to your experience what are the challenges for the university in expanding enrolments?

NOTE: particular phrasing of questions and their order may be modified to fit the specific interview. Interviews will vary with the specific informant being interviewed.

Questions

Guide 3

1. Could you explain if the strategic plan of the university was informed by any national policies?
2. Who initiated drafting of the university's strategic plan and what was their role?
3. Please elaborate if there was any networking between state and the university during the strategic plan drafting process?
4. Please explain if the state has a say in the admission function of the university?
5. What communication channels/mode of interaction is there between government and university?
6. What are government's main priorities/ agenda for discussion during this communication/interaction forum?
7. Has there been financial support/programme specifically aimed at increasing student enrolment? Elaborate your answer?
8. What category of students was targeted?
9. How was the university's non-residential student programme initiated?
10. How was the enrolment target in the university's strategic plan arrived at?
11. In your experience is this target only symbolic or an active goal?
12. Please explain if the state discusses standards for admission?
13. Could you elaborate what these standards are and how they are communicated?
14. Explain if these standards are negotiable in your experience?



Questions

Guide 4

1. Please explain who influenced and initiated drafting of the following national policies i.e. Education Act (1962), Policy Investment Frameworks (1995-2005; 2000-2012), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2001), and Vision 2020 (1996)?
2. Can you describe any form of interaction that is taking place between government and higher education institutions?
3. Which category of higher education institutions do you interact with?
4. Please explain the areas that you collaborate on?
5. Has there been any programmes set up by government to financially support Malawian undergraduate students to (1) study abroad (2) enrol in online programmes (3) expand infrastructure in order to increase supply of university places. Elaborate on each.
6. If yes, are any of these programmes exclusively government supported or are in collaboration with any sector and institutions?
7. Can you describe the specific mode of influence in terms of initiation of this programme?
8. Please explain if higher education national enrolment levels/statistics have ever been a topic for discussion? Elaborate your answer.
9. What are the priorities of government in terms of higher education enrolments?
10. To what extent does government support different types of higher education recommendations contained in policy documents?
11. In your experience how would you explain relationships/interaction between

- government and public universities on one hand and private universities on the other?
12. According to your experience how would you react to suggestions that the values of government on higher education enrolments are contrary to policy statements such as “The mission to provide education for ALL” available on the Ministry of Education website” ?

Closing Remarks

Guide 4

Is there anything more you would like to add?

I will be analysing the information you and others gave me in due course and submitting a final draft paper after that. I will be happy to send you a copy to review if you are interested.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C: Key informants interview guide(s)

Introduction

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is **Nita Chivwara** a Master of Education student at University of the Western Cape in South Africa. I would like to talk to you about your experiences in higher education policy making, interaction and implementation including governance of higher education in general. Specifically, the research is looking at higher education participation in this country.

The interview should take less than an hour. I would like to request your permission to tape record the session because I do not want to miss any of your comments. All responses will only be used for this research. Remember, you do not have to talk about anything you do not want to and you may end the interview at any time.

Date _____

Question guide for Members on the Higher level Committee for the formation of the Council for higher education

13. Please explain what influenced the formation of a council for higher education?
14. Can you describe the membership of this committee and the perceived rationale behind selection of such members?
15. Can you describe the type of policy concerns that the committee is working on or discussing related to higher education enrolments?
16. Which category of higher education institutions do you interact with as a committee?
17. Please explain the areas that you collaborate on?
18. Can you describe the perceived policy concerns within the higher level committee related to (a) higher education enrolments or admission practices/participation rates

19. If yes, are any of the plans discussed by the council exclusively government supported or are in collaboration with other sectors and institutions? Please explain?
20. To what extent has the committee initiated or implemented the terms of reference drawn up for the committee?
21. One of the policy goals of the National Education Sector Plan (2008 –2017) aims at instituting a Council for higher education which among other things shall ensure gender balance and inclusion of vulnerable groups (NESP 2008 –2017). In your experience has this policy goal or such policies been tabled yet, for further follow up by the council?
12. One of the powers and objects invested in the council is to determine a framework for funding of public institutions of higher education. In your deliberations as a committee What is the rationale behind this role? Has there been a gap or challenges identified by past practices? Are there any implications for enrolment expansion?

Closing Remarks

Is there anything more you would like to add?

I will be analysing the information you and others gave me in due course and submitting a final draft paper after that. I will be happy to send you a copy to review if you are interested.

Thank you for your time.


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WESTERN CAPE