

**EFFECTS OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON PERFORMANCE AND  
CAREER OF BUREAUCRATS IN MALAWI**

**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

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CHANCELLOR COLLEGE**

**JANUARY, 2018**

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**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

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Thesis submitted to the Department of Political and Administrative studies, Faculty of  
Social Sciences, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Public Administration and Management

**University of Malawi**

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**January, 2018**

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

**JAMES MONJEZA CHAGUNDA**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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**Main Supervisor**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Professor Dan Banik

**Second Supervisor**

## **DEDICATION**

To my Mum and late Dad

And

To my lovely wife Thandiwe and my daughter Danielle.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank God for His guidance and wisdom in seeing me through to this end.

I am grateful to my two supervisors, Professors Lewis Dzimbiri and Dan Banik who guided me throughout the study stages; I express my gratitude for your assistance and guidance.

Let me also thank all civil servants from various government Ministries and Department and all those who gave their time to participate in the study.

To my wife Thandiwe and daughter Danielle, thank you for your endurance and understanding as I struggled with my studies and research undertakings. Finally, I would like to thank Chancellor College Main Library, Department of Political and Administrative Studies Staff members and MPAM 2015 class for their support during my whole period of study

## **ABSTRACT**

This study is an analysis of the effects of political influence on performance and career of bureaucrats in Malawi. It examines factors which influence political appointments; attitude of civil servants towards political appointments; how patronage political appointments interfere with the way civil servants execute their duties and how the practice of patronage appointments has affected career growth for civil servants. Two methods were used to collect data for the study. These were interviews and documents examination. Firstly, from the study, it was observed that civil servants perceive political appointment as a tool used by politicians to reward those civil servants who are in good terms with the regime or a way of punishing those civil servants who appear to be against the regime. This is done through transfers, postings and promotions which aim paving way for new appointees. The study establishes that patronage based appointments have resulted in competent public servants staying longer on a position without being promoted as a result of unmerited practices of recruitment and promotions. Therefore, to ensure a neutral competent public service, the study proposes that undue and inappropriate influence of politicians over public servants needs to be kept at a minimum or avoided completely. One way of ensuring this is by instituting an independent body which can vet, recommend and confirm or endorse appointments of all top public service positions.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADC	Appointment and Disciplinary Committee
CD	Chief Directors
CHRMO	Chief Human Resources Management Officer
CSTU	Civil Service Trade Union
CSC	Civil Service Commission
DHRMD	Department of Human Resource Management and Development
HSC	Health Service Commission
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
LGSC	Local Government Service Commission
MDA	Ministry, Departments and Agencies
MoLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MoGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare
MoLHUD	Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development
OPC	Office of President Cabinet
PAC	Public Appointments Committee
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PSC	Public Service Commission
PS	Principal Secretary
PSC	Police Service Commission
US	Undersecretary

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a general background to the study and its focus. Firstly, it introduces the purpose of the thesis, and then presents scope of the Malawi public service, followed by problem statement and later study objectives and justifications for the study. Finally, the chapter presents thesis outline and summary for whole chapter one.

The main purpose of this thesis is to critically examine the effects of political influence on performance and career of bureaucrats in Malawi. Specifically it examines how political influence affects the recruitment and promotion of top positions in the Malawi civil service and the way bureaucrats perform their duties. Focus is on civil servants serving in government ministries and departments at grade A to E<sup>1</sup>. These categories of civil servants were chosen considering that all grades from A to E within the Malawi civil service are recruited and promoted through political appointments. Political appointments in this context simply imply public

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<sup>1</sup> Civil service positions in Malawi are identified through both names of the positions and grades. The civil service uses English alphabetical letters to refer to a grade of a position. Each letter corresponds to a certain position in the civil service following a consecutive sequence of the alphabetical letters. For instance, the chief secretary to the government, who is the head of the public service is at grade A; deputy chief secretary is at grade B; principal secretaries are at grade C; directors are at grade D; deputy directors at grade E; assistant directors at grade F; professional officers grade I; clerical officers grade M; drivers, messengers and security guards grade N and all the industrial workers who are the least officers on the civil service radar falls at grades O, P and Q. All grades from A to E are recruited and promoted through political appointments while grades from F to Q through merit based systems.

appointments made by politicians (Allern et al, 2011). While all civil servants from grade F to Q are recruited and promoted through merit (Dzimiri, 2016). Merit here implies the process of promoting and hiring government employees through a competitive criteria and consideration for the job is done based on their ability to perform rather than political connections (McCourt, 2007). As such civil servants from grade A to E are likely to be direct beneficiaries or victims of political appointments in regard to recruitment and promotion compared to the civil servants from grade F to Q who are recruited through merit.

## **1.2 Study Background**

The public sector is the implementing agency of the state (Tambulasi and Kayuni, 2007). Dzimiri (2008) describes it as the main tool which governments use to implement various national development policies and deliver services in education, health, community development, transport, maintenance of law and order among others. The public service consists of government Ministries, Departments and Agencies which implements government agendas. According to the Malawi Public Service charter, the mandate of the Public Service covers: The civil service (government, ministries and departments), parastatals, judicial services, parliamentary services, Malawi defence force, Malawi police service, immigration, prison service and constitutional bodies.

While many contemporary democracies utilize public service regulations that provide public service human resources with merit promotions and protection from arbitrary dismissal, inventive politicians have found ways of working around the spirit of such constraints. These include transfers to new locations or activities that are known in

advance to be unacceptable, assigning projects that require traveling when they are unable to do so, restructuring agencies to shift responsibilities, creating parallel processes that marginalize their roles, or offering “promotions” to new positions only to get them out of the way (Cayer 2009). This is one of the ways through which politics influences and interferes with public service human resource management. This thesis interrogates how political influence has been interfering with recruitment; promotion and performance of bureaucrats in the Malawi civil service.

### **1.3 The Scope of Malawi Civil Service**

Malawi achieved independence from Britain in 1964. In the early 1990s it transitioned from one party dictatorship to multiparty democracy. According to Dzimbiri (2016) the Malawi public service was molded by the British public service in terms of rules and regulations and governing principles which embraced the principles recommended in the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1853). These principles include political impartiality, objectivity, integrity, accountability, confidentiality, open recruitment and promotion on merit basis. Dzimbiri further argues that it is the transition to the multiparty era in 1994 that transformed public service and resulted in the establishments of trade unions for civil servants that negotiate with the government for better conditions of services. Several public service reforms have been executed aiming at improving Malawi public service’s performance. Initially the reforms were as outcomes of studies starting with the Skinner commission and later the Herbercq commission which called for the re-organization of the public service in terms of structures, governing principles and condition of service (Dzimbiri, 2016). In Malawi, the Department of Human Resource Management and Development (DHRMD) under the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) is responsible for the

administration and management of the public service in all the line ministries and departments through its human resource representatives. Its vision is “a high quality and result-oriented public service” and its mission is “to foster and sustain a high quality and result-oriented, accountable and transparent public service through the development and implementation of equitable, sound human and institutional resource management policies, strategies, practices and systems in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness” in the public service (Dzimhiri, 2016:11).

The Malawi civil service is composed of eighteen government ministries. These are Ministries of Disaster relief management and public events; Finance, economic, planning and development; Gender, children, disability and social welfare; Local government and rural development; Health and population; Labour, youth, sports and manpower development; Lands, housing and urban development; Defence; Agriculture, irrigation and water development; Education, science and technology; Justice and constitutional affairs; Home affairs and internal security; Transport and public works; Information and communication technology; Civic education, culture, community and development; and Natural resources, energy and mining (Malawi Government, 2017).

The civil service consists of mostly educated, well trained career-oriented personnel. These include: architects, information and technology specialists, doctors and health workers, administrators, primary and secondary school teachers, field assistants, community development staff, agricultural officers, clerical and accounting staff, secretarial staff, human resource officers, engineers, scientists, lawyers, judges and magistrates, among others. There are also those who work in the police, prisons,

immigration, parliament as well as other public institutions city, municipal, town and district councils, parastatal and constitutional bodies.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement**

Both theoretical and empirical evidences suggest that there is political influence in the management of public service human resource. This political influence is evident in terms of how bureaucrats are recruited, promoted and carry out their duties. According to existing literature, recruitments and promotions through political appointments are made as a reward to supporters who helped elect the President (Wyrsh, 2007) and to have bureaucrats who will pursue interests of ruling politicians without any conflict of interests (Bendor etal, 2001; Huber and Shipan 2006). As Richard Nixon (USA President, 1969-1974) put it to his cabinet, “I urged the new cabinet members to move quickly to replace holdover bureaucrats with people who believed in what we were trying to do. ... [I warned that] if we don’t get rid of those people, they will either sabotage us from within, or they’ll just sit back on their well-paid asses and wait for the next election to bring back their old bosses” (Wilkis and Nelson, 2003:352).

Dzimhiri (2016) argues that what has been typical over the years is that successive governments in Malawi have been characterized by appointment, promotion, transfer and dismissal of senior public servants of their choice without following proper procedures. Observation from the literature is that appointment of principal secretaries, directors, and other senior officers in the Malawi civil service has always been politically influenced. For example, there are instances where cabinet ministers influence recruitment through directing top civil servants to employ relatives and

friend's children (Dzimhiri, 2016). The existing literature, however, does not elaborate much on how political influence affects performance and careers of bureaucrat in Malawi. Therefore, this thesis intends to interrogate on effects such political influence on both performance and career progress for Malawian civil servants.

## **1.5 Objectives**

### **1.5.1 General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to critically examine the effects of political influence on performance and career progression for civil servants in Malawi.

### **1.5.2 Specific objectives of the Study**

- a) To examine the factors that influence political appointments in the civil service in Malawi
- b) To determine the attitude of Malawian civil servants towards political appointments.
- c) To analyze the effects of political influence on how civil servants execute their duties
- d) To examine the impact of patronage appointments on the career growth of civil servants

## **1.6 Justifications for the Study**

Human resources are most important for the implementation of national development policies. The way they are recruited, selected, appointed, oriented, trained, rewarded or disciplined affect their commitment, motivation and productivity (Dzimhiri, 2016). Therefore, there is a need to critically examine the effects of political influence on

performance and career progression for civil servants in Malawi. To explore how patronage appointments practices affect civil servants and the way they deliver their services to the public. The second purpose of this thesis has been to extend the knowledge base that currently exists on understanding on political influence and its manifestations in public administration in Malawi.

### **1.7 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter consists of study background; the scope of Malawi civil service; problem statement; study objectives and justifications. Chapter two reviews the literature in relation to the study objectives and presents the conceptual framework for the study. Firstly, chapter two discusses key concepts in the study such as political influence, patronage, merit selection, political appointments and politicization. Secondly the literature review critically examines factors which influence political appointments and the attitudes of civil servants towards political appointment. Lastly the chapter tackled on the general implications of political appointments in the civil service.

Chapter three of the thesis presents the research framework for the study. It begins by presenting the conceptualization of important terms in the study. It also outlines methods and tools used to collect data. Sampling techniques, sample size, methods of data analysis follow thereafter. Chapter four presents research findings of the study. Firstly, the chapter presents findings on the recruitment processes in the Malawi civil service. Secondly, it presents findings on what motivates political appointments in the Malawi civil service. Last but one, chapter four presents findings on attitudes of Malawian civil servants towards political appointments and lastly the chapter presents

findings on how patronage appointments interferes with how civil servants execute their duties and the extent to which patronage appointments affect career progress for civil servants. The last chapter of the thesis concludes the study findings.

### **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has provided a general background to the study and its focus. It has also given an outline of this thesis. The next chapter presents and discusses the relevant literature to this study and theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter draws on research and materials from different disciplines which include history, political science and public administration. It examines the relationship between politics and administration and how politics interferes with public sector human resources management. Specifically, it defines key concepts and terminologies which have been frequently referred to in this thesis. They have been defined considering that they might have multiple interpretations when used in different disciplines and environment. These key terminologies are political influence, patronage, merit selection and political appointments and politicization. The chapter also presents a discussion on politics and administration dichotomy and principal agent theory. These are the paradigms which have guided the study. Lastly the chapter discusses general factors which influence political appointments; attitudes of public servants towards political appointment; and the general implications of patronage appointment in the public service.

#### **2.2 Key terminologies and concepts**

##### **2.2.1 Political influence**

‘Political influence’ is a compound term made up of two separate and distinct words. Influence is the ability to get others to act, think or feel as one desires (Banfield, 2009). Influence is generally often more indirect and sometimes barely perceptible,

even though it can also be a blunt instrument of coercion. In the public service, influence can be exercised or applied in several ways. However, for this to happen it may require the creation of a network system of influence. The appropriate people must be persuaded, deceived, coerced, among other things to implement what is required of them (Banfield, 2009). Whereas influence works in several ways, what is crucial is the method being employed to achieve behaviour change of the person being influenced, and how the method acts upon the expectations and the motivation of the person being influenced (Banfield, 2009). This research presents arguments supported by data to demonstrate how public servants, through the patronage appointment system, have been persuaded, coerced or otherwise influenced to undertake what politicians require of them.

Political refers to matters of legitimacy and distribution of power as they affect (Wamsley and Zald, 1973). In this chapter however, political influence is applied to mean the influence process in which the behaviour of the public servant or policies are strategically designed to maximize short or long term partisan interests, at the expense of public interest (Judge and Bretz, 1992).

### **2.2.2 Patronage**

Patronage is founded on the reciprocal relations between patrons and clients (Weingrod, 1968). In this context the term patron refers to a person who uses her/his influence to assist and protect some other person, who then becomes a “client” and in return the client provides certain services to the patron. The structure of the patronage system is based on social relationships between clients seeking for an individual with the ability to protect them and a patron who accepts these duties in return for political

allegiance. In patronage, the transactor (patron) has the power to give some benefit which the respondent (client) desires (Weingrod, 1968).

In political science, patronage is often grouped and seen as a form of exchange where allocation of state resources is aimed at and is important for maximizing an actor's probability for re-election (Diamond, 2010) Thus, patronage is frequently used to refer to the ways in which party politicians distribute public jobs or special favours in exchange for electoral support (Weingrod, 1968). Hollyer (2010) defines political patronage as the bidding for public offices by both skilled and unskilled candidates by offering political services in exchange for public posts. Similar definition of party patronage defines it as the "power of a party to appoint people to positions in public and semi-public life, considering the scope of patronage to be the range of positions so distributed" (Kopecky and Scherilis, 2008:3). The common element in all the political patronage definitions is the appointments to positions in the state in exchange for political services. These positions may, for example, include posts in the civil service, public sector companies and their governing boards, public universities, public advisory committees and commissions, semi-autonomous state agencies, and other regulatory bodies. In this case patronage is understood as the power to control appointments into office or right of privileges (Kopecky and Scherilis, 2008). More recently, political patronage has been used to refer to the granting of favours, contracts and rewards beyond public positions by politicians in exchange for electoral support (Smith and Mesquita, 2010).

Patronage can thus best be thought of as an incentive system; a political currency with which to purchase political activity and political responses. The primary functions of

patronage are: attracting voters and supporters, financing the party and its candidates in procuring supportive government action and creating a favorable environment for formulating and implementing policies in the interest of the party or politicians in power (Weingrod, 1968).

In this study patronage system has been understood as a practice where a political party, after winning an election, gives government jobs to its supporters, friends and relatives as a reward for working toward victory, and as an incentive to keep working for the party as opposed to a merit system, where offices are awarded based on some measure of merit independent of political activity. Patronage appointments and promotion is an opposite to merit system which ensures that principles are designed to ensure fair and open recruitment, competition and employment practices free of political influence or other non-merit factors.

### **2.2.3 Merit selection**

A merit based system is the process of promoting and hiring government employees based on their ability to perform a job, rather than on their political connections. McCourt (2007) defines merit as the appointment of the best person for any given job. According to Tanku and Imeri (2014) merit is considering the ability of a person as the cornerstone that determines the person's appointment.

Godwin (2011) argues that merit ensures that all appointments and promotions are based on equitable system excluding all political or other patronage, throwing all appointments open to rich and poor alike, and establishing merit combined with fitness as the only basis of selection. Merit is about the worthiness of a potential

employee to a specific organization. It combines his or her education, skills, experience, and background insofar as these things are relevant to performing a specific job well (Hirsch, 1999).

The merit system is, therefore, intended to give all potentially qualified and deserving candidates an equal and fair opportunity of achieving success through their own personal efforts, which are usually a mixture of effort and talent, both innate and cultivated (Tan, 2008). Because merit based appointees are assumed to owe 'nobody' a favor they are expected to be neutral or non-partisan. Weimer (2005) defines neutral competence as carrying out constitutional policies made by the legitimate government effectively. The merit system is hence a reflection of commitment to fundamental public service values. However, the concept of merit and its key features are potentially contradictory. In purporting to be non-discriminatory and allowing equal opportunity a merit system can perpetuate inequality. Tan (2008) notes that a merit based system are often based on the principle of non-discrimination; thus selection must be blind to race, gender, age or class differences. The merit based system in trying to be blind to the realities of race, gender or age to satisfy merit principles, is fundamentally treating people with unequal backgrounds as the same. Thus, by being blind to inequalities in the society, the merit principle can perpetuate discrimination of disadvantaged communities without access to good schools, leading to lack of access to good education and training. Because of such inherent inequalities, merit principle need to be adapted to local context, otherwise in its ideal form, it ignores and even conceals the real advantages and disadvantages inherent in every society and treats every applicant as equal. For instance, if the merit principle is applied without considering social, economic and even political background of applicants, in some of

the international organization such as the World Bank, then applicants from developing countries would be disadvantaged (Tan, 2008).

#### **2.2.4 Political appointments and politicization**

A wide definition of political appointments would simply imply public appointments made by politicians (Allern, 2011). Political appointments, or politically influenced appointments are thus broadly applied to mean selection of candidates to public sector positions based on other considerations apart from merit (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Merit is applied here to mean an open and competitive appointment system (Lewis, 2007). There are other aspects of merit which may target specific attributes such as gender balance and disability. Conventionally, public service recruitment and promotion is based on selection and recruitment from appropriately qualified individuals selected in fair and open competition, solely based on merit, assessed in relation to the position involved (Armstrong and Matsuda, 2003; Australian Federal Government, 2012; Government of South Africa, 2002; Government of South Australia, 2001; Grindle, 2012). In the United States, the system of political appointments comes from a history of the spoils system (also known as a patronage system) which is a practice where a political party, after winning an election, gives government jobs to its supporters, friends and relatives as a reward for working toward victory. According to the United States Office of Government Ethics, a political appointee is understood as any government employee who is appointed by the President, the Vice President, or agency head.

Politicization is a wide and complex subject with many different dimensions. It can take the form of civil servants' participation in political decision-making, hence the

involvement at the very top levels or the involvement of public servants in political activities and voter mobilization and many other forms in between (Rouban, 2003). The participation of civil servants in political decision making has an impact on the existing political-administrative relations (Badie and Morlino, 2011). Within these broad parameters, Peters and Pierre (2004:2) give what they call a basic definition of politicization of the public service as “the substitution of political criteria for merit based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards and disciplining of members of the public service” given the expansive nature of politicization and its application in different contexts, political criteria being employed in politicizing the public service can vary from being based on policy implementation preferences to personal clientelistic connections to politicians (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Basically politicization is the term being associated both with the exercise of control over the human resource management elements of the relationship as well as the tasks performed by public servants.

Political appointments lie at the core of an issue which has been of interest to political science and public administration, namely the relationship between politics and administration. Early thinkers on the subject (Wilson 1887; Weber 1968) tended to present politics and bureaucracy as two separate worlds which would not blend easily and only at a cost to both. Such early theorizing, often referred to as the “politics administration dichotomy”, saw bureaucratic autonomy, based on hierarchical management and clearly defined career paths, as an essential part of an impartial and technically well-functioning bureaucracy (Allern et al, 2011). A different perspective on political appointments may also be derived from principal-agent theory which is used to explain the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats.

### **2.3 The politics-administration dichotomy**

At the heart of the public administration is the relationship between administrators, on one hand, and politicians and the public on the other hand. The proper role of public administration in the political process has remained an important question since the emergence of public administration as a field of study in the late 1880s. The politics-administration dichotomy is a theory that constructs the boundaries of public administration and asserts the normative relationship between elected officials and administrators in a democratic society (Svara, 1998).

In his famous article, Wilson (1887) outlined what later happened to be called the politics-administration dichotomy, a theoretical model that emphasizes distinct features of public administration vis-à-vis politics. In According to Wilson (1887) public administration lies outside the proper sphere of politics. According to Demir (1993) the politics-administration dichotomy rests on a functional-structural view of government, dividing governmental authority between elected and administrative officials along functional lines. As such, government is conceptualized as though it has two discrete domains as politics and administration, with each one occupied separately by elected and administrative officials. Politics-administration dichotomy aimed to separate the power between political leaders and the merit-based appointment of professional permanent civil servants in the administrative state. The role of administrators is to help to shape public policy, and give it specific content and meaning in the process of implementation while elected officials oversee implementation, probe specific complaints about poor performance, and attempt to correct problems with performance through fine-tuning of the policy.

In his writing, Woodrow Wilson tried to promote public administration by outlining a distinction between politics and administration. He stated that administration is a field of business that is removed from the "hurry and strife of politics". To him, administrative questions are discrete from political questions because political questions are policy questions, whereas public administration is the "detailed and systematic execution of public law" (Wilson, 1887).

Demir (1993) argued in support of Wilson's assertions. He was concerned about the negative effects of the spoil system on government administration. He recognized that the spoil system impaired administrative efficiency and was a threat to democratic government. Goodnow rejected political party control over administration as the best way to harmonize the expression of the popular will. According to Goodnow, certain areas of administration should be isolated from politics. These include the administration of justice; technical, scientific information gathering; as well as purely administrative management issues. These functions should be performed by politically neutral, tenured and competent individuals who are to act in a semi-scientific, quasi-judicial, and quasi-businesslike fashion (Demir, 1993). The central argument of Wilson and Demir was that politics and patronage threatened the efficiency of administration and that, in general, administrative and political questions were and should be distinct. The former should be addressed by technically competent civil servants insulated from politics.

Public administration scholars proposed numerous explanations and theoretical models in their attempts to understand the role of public administration in the political process (Dzimbiri, 2016). As a result three schools- separation, political, and interaction have emerged to explain politics-administration dichotomy.

### **2.3.1 Separation school of thought**

The separation school analyzes the relationship between politics and administration. It argues that the function of politics is to provide guidance, or what Wilson (1887) said, “setting the task for administration” and public administration functions to provide neutral competence to the policy process. Elected officials provide political guidance through policy leadership and legislative oversight. Policy leadership links elected officials to citizens, while legislative oversight links them to public administrators. On the other side of the policy process stands public administration whose primary responsibility is to enable public policies into concrete implementation in conformity with legislative intentions and instructions.

### **2.3.2 Political school of thought**

The political school rejects the politics-administration distinction as its proponents consider public administration as an inseparable part of the political process (Demir, 1993). Factors such as vague and ambiguous legislations, lack of technical knowledge and difficulties in monitoring and controlling bureaucratic behavior, are used to justify the critical role of public administrators in the policy process. Public administrators are viewed as policy makers and policy advocates. This approach rejects the subordinate and instrumental role of public administration in relating to elected officials. However, this fusion has its own challenges that forced the British public service in the 19th century to detest when politicians were handing out public sector jobs to friends and supporters leading to corruption, favoritism, politicization and inefficiency. That is why the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1853) appealed for a meritocratic system that would enhance public administration performance (Dzimhiri, 2016).

### **2.3.3 Interaction school of thought**

The interaction school emphasizes a high degree of collaboration between elected and administrative officials while maintaining each one's traditional roles and unique perspectives. In a sense, the interaction school seeks a middle ground between the separation and political schools. The interaction school acknowledges the differences between politics and administration in several ways such as logical and psychological differences between politics and administration, or dissimilarities in the perspectives, values, and formal positions of elected and administrative officials (Svara, 2001).

According to Svara (2001), what makes the interaction school somewhat different from the separation school is its emphasis on ongoing cooperation between elected and administrative officials in the process of policy making. New Public Management (NPM) movement calls for new ways of running governments just like business and reshaping the relations among politicians, administrators, markets and citizens. The strengthening role of administrators in the political process as well as the increasing involvement of politicians in process of policy implementation put more emphases on their interaction and complementarities.

Critics to politics and administration dichotomy argued that we cannot separate politics and administration. If politics includes all of what we know as policy making, then the dichotomy would bar administrators from participation. It is not conceptually possible to have a one-way dichotomy that keeps elected official out of administration but allows administrators to be active in policy (Svara, 1998). Later, Woodrow Wilson asserted that administrators should be involved in the policy process and elected officials should be involved in the administrative process (Demir, 1993).

Existing literature on this issue frequently agrees that in theory there is a division between political and administrative roles but in practice it is impossible to define a marked border between political and administrative actors (Mulgan, 2007).

#### **2.4 Principal–agent relationship**

The principal-agent relationship is an arrangement in which one entity legally appoints another to act on its behalf. In this relationship the agent acts on behalf of the principal and should not have a conflict of interest in carrying out the act (Moe, 2012). The formal terms of a specific principal-agent relationship are often described in a contract. For example, when an investor buys shares of an index fund, he is the principal, and the fund manager becomes his agent. As an agent, the index fund manager must manage the fund, which consists of many principals' assets, in a way that will maximize returns for a given level of risk in accordance with the fund's prospectus.

The principal-agent relationship can be entered into by any willing and able parties for any legal transaction. In simple cases, the principal within the relationship is a sole individual who assigns an agent to carry out a task; however, other relationships under this guise have a principal that is a corporation, a nonprofit organization, a government agency or a partnership (Lewis, 2007). The agent is most often an individual capable of understanding and ultimately carrying out the task assigned by the principal. Common examples of the principal-agent relationship include hiring a contractor to complete a repair on a home, retaining an attorney to perform legal work, or asking an investment advisor to diversify a portfolio of stocks. In each scenario, the principal is the individual seeking out the service or advice of a

professional, while the agent is the professional performing the work. From this perspective, the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is understood as one of principal and agent. The politicians are the principals, the bureaucrats the agents. All else being equal, political principals generally prefer to rely on bureaucratic agents with common interests (Bendor et al, 2001).

#### **2.4.1 Principal and agent responsibilities**

Whether the principal-agent relationship is expressed clearly through a written contract or is implied through actions, the principal-agent relationship creates a fiduciary relationship between the parties involved. This means the agent acting on behalf of the principal must carry out the assigned tasks with the principal's best interest as priority. The agent is responsible for completing tasks given by the principal so long as the principal provides reasonable instruction. Additionally, the agent has an obligation to perform tasks with a certain level of skill and care and may not intentionally or negligently complete the task in an improper manner. A duty of loyalty is also implied within the principal-agent relationship, which requires the agent to refrain from putting himself in a position that creates or encourages a conflict between his interest and the interest of the principal (Moe, 2012).

Discussions about the relationship between bureaucrats and politicians frequently take Max Weber's model of bureaucracy as a starting point (Moe, 2012). Weber argued that the division of labor between politicians and bureaucrats would work best when there is a clear distinction between the two sets of actors. He saw administrators as instrumental and subordinate to politicians – as technical experts who should advise and efficiently execute the decisions of politicians as the sovereign representative. He

saw “neutral competence” as a determining characteristic of the administrator. However, while politicians are in charge of defining the policies to be implemented by bureaucrats, Weber pointed out the danger that career civil servants might dominate politicians through their superior knowledge, technical expertise and longer experience, in contrast to the frequently changing ministers. This observation corresponds to what new institutional economics refers to as “information asymmetry” the possibility that the “principal” may be thwarted in their efforts to control and direct the “agent”, because the agent is able to hide, or fail to reveal important information (Moe, 2012).

#### **2.4.2 Agency problem**

The generic premise is that bureaucrats typically have access to two kinds of private information, which in turn cause two kinds of problems for the politicians. First, bureaucrats can have hidden information about their own motivations and capabilities; and second, since politicians cannot always observe what their bureaucrats are doing, they will sometimes have opportunity to take hidden actions. If politicians and bureaucrats have conflicting interests, then the bureaucrats also have incentive to exploit their superior information in order to make it appear as if they have the qualities that politicians desire-such as expert knowledge and loyalty- as well as to act in ways that make themselves better off even if it were to make the politicians worse off. The problem of hidden information is often referred to as adverse selection, while the problem of hidden action is often referred to as moral hazard (Moe, 2012). Such agency problems are what drive ruling politicians to appoint, promote and support administrative officials that affirm their partisan ambitions, and to replace, marginalize and subvert those that deny them. This means that politicians, the

principals, will always want the bureaucrats, their agents, to be those that will not pursue their personal agendas at the expense of the interests of their political masters.

The principal-agent relationship and political and administration dichotomy arguments were chosen as research theoretical framework for this study. Principal agent relationship argument was ideal for the study because it explains the motivation for political appointments in the public service. Political principals generally prefer to rely on bureaucratic agents with common interests as a way of dealing with agency problems. Politics- administration dichotomy examines the relationship and roles between politicians and public administrators. This paradigm relates to one of the study objectives which examined the impact of political influence on how civil servants perform their duties. Both principal agent and politics-administration dichotomy arguments guided me to collect and analyze data in view of the research objectives with the understanding of the relationship that exists between the principal politicians and their bureaucratic agents.

The study is guided by the principal agent theory and politics administration dichotomy paradigm. At the centre of principal-agent theory is a relationship that exists between principals and agents (Moe, 2012). This principal-agent relationship involves an arrangement in which one entity (principal) legally appoints another (agent) to act on its behalf. From this perspective, the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is understood as one of principal and agent whereby the politicians are the principals while the bureaucrats the agents. All else being equal, political principals generally prefer to rely on bureaucratic agents with common interests (Bendor, Glazer and Hammond 2001). This drives ruling politicians to appoint,

promote and support administrative officials that affirm their partisan ambitions, and to replace, marginalize and subvert those that deny them (Huber and Shipan 2006).

The politics-administration dichotomy paradigm rests on a functional-structural view of government, dividing governmental authority between elected and administrative officials along functional lines (Demir, 1993). It aimed to separate the power between political leaders and the merit-based appointment of professional permanent civil servants in the administrative state. The role of administrators is to help to shape public policy, and give it specific content and meaning in the process of implementation while elected officials oversee implementation, probe specific complaints about poor performance, and attempt to correct problems with performance through fine-tuning of the policy (Wilson, 1887).

In the study, the principal agent theory is used to explain the relationship that exists between the politicians and bureaucrats and explain motivation behind political appointments. The politics administration dichotomy paradigm is used to understand the roles of politicians and bureaucrats in the public service management. This understanding guided the researcher to collect and analyze data in view of the research objectives with the considerate of the relationship that exists between the principal politicians and their agents (bureaucrats).

## **2.5 Factors that influence political appointments in the public service**

The distribution of public jobs by political leaders has been traditionally seen as a form of reward or an incentive delivered to actual or potential party activists in order to strengthen a pre-existent party organization and political leaders always ensure that key decision-making positions in the public service are staffed by administrative officials whose preferences and priorities are similar to those of their own (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999).

Scholars agree that across democracies and non-democracies political appointments are mainly used by politicians as a method to boost their political support (Remmer, 2007; Lewis, 2007). As such the primary reason for political appointments, theoretically, is to assure political accountability. A secondary reason is to reward supporters who helped elect the President. Thirdly political appointment is a tool which politicians use to influence public policy formulation and implementation. Boyne (2010) argues that the most straightforward way for political leaders to shift the public policy positions is by intervening in the screening and selection of its personnel. They must ensure that the policy formulation and implementing bureaucrats are of the same interests with theirs. If the political parties in power can secure the most important administrative positions for bureaucrats with common interests, they can also keep opposing policy views off the agenda and effectively bias government agency decision making in their own favor.

Scherlis (2009) identifies factors which influence political appointments in the public service as follows; seeking electoral support, party cohesion and discipline, party fund-raising, network of activists and control of state institutions.

### **2.5.1 Seeking electoral support**

The distribution of state jobs may seek to attain and conserve electoral support. This idea encompasses both those cases in which the positions are offered as an incentive to vote for the party and those in which they function as a payoff for those who have proved loyal voters in both general and intra-party elections. In times of the cadre or elite party, in the early phases of democratization, the distribution of state jobs was a common mode of getting votes. For example, Shipan (2006) argues that until the Pendleton civil service reform Act was passed in 1883, several hundreds of thousands of federal jobs were distributed politically in the United States, with strong impacts on elections. He describes how the distribution of jobs functioned as the main electoral tool used by political notables in the city of Buenos Aires during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most specialists who have discussed the issue generally agree that in contemporary mass democracies it is unlikely that patronage fulfills an electoral strategy for general elections; however high the number of public employees, it seems unlikely that it can secure an electoral advantage in a general election (Scherlis, 2009).

### **2.5.2 Enhancing party cohesion and discipline**

The distribution of mid and top level positions in government is many times critical in order to boost intra-party cooperation (Scherlis, 2009). A wise distribution of public positions is part of the strategy to keep a party unified, knitting together the various - often loose and heterogeneous – factions and groups that comprise a party organization (Key, 1964:367). Hence it is customary that parties' dominant coalitions reserve some important positions in government for other party factions. In this case, the distribution of jobs may also be targeted to strengthen and cement the party as an

organization. As Ware (1996: 349) notes, government is an obvious resource for strengthening the party itself, allowing the placement of “party supporters in administrative or quasi-administrative positions over which the government has influence” (Scherlis, 2009).

### **2.5.3 Party fund-raising**

Appointments can be a significant source of fund-raising for the party when the appointees are compelled to contribute a percentage of their salaries in return for the appointment. It is an established norm in many parties that a fixed share of the salaries of those who get their jobs due to their party affiliation is destined to the party budget. More informally, it is not uncommon for a functionary who has the power to appoint people to finance his/her political group activities by getting a percentage of the employees’ wages (Scherlis, 2009). In countries where bureaucratic systems of control are weak, certain appointments may also be directly related to the control of state resources with partisan goals (Lewis, 2007).

### **2.5.4 Control of state institutions**

Party patronage may be used to pursue the control of crucial areas of government in order to secure the implementation of policies along the lines preferred by the party. This is what Lewis (2007) means when he refers to “power patronage”, as opposed to “service patronage”. A party concerned with the implementation of its program will surely try to appoint the proper and trustworthy personnel to be sure that the program is realized. Patronage in this sense is conceived as a requisite to guarantee the very existence of party government (Kopecky, 2008). In Rose’s (1974:382) terms, party government requires that “... the number of partisans nominated for office should be

large enough to permit partisans to become involved in many aspects of government”. For example, Díez (2004) affirms that when the Spanish Socialist Party took office in 1982 it carried out a massive replacement of top cadres of the administration, not to reward or compensate activists, but as a necessary measure “in order to implement their programme”. The control of state institutions through appointments may also be understood in a broader sense, not just in the sense of implementing a party platform but also taking over state institutions and putting them in the service of a political party (Scherlis, 2009). As Blondel (2002) notes, ruling parties may try to “... invade or even take over the state” in order to be able to undertake shady deals and illegal practices at their political convenience (Scherlis, 2009). A common example is that of ruling parties staffing the public media with partisans and propagandists in order to offer a biased pro-government standpoint, as it is the case with Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (Manda, 2007).

## **2.6 Attitudes of public servants towards political appointment**

Simmons (2008) noted that attitudes imply evaluation and are concerned with how people feel about an issue. According to Sundell (2013) there is perception that the traditional centralized recruitment system based on formal examinations leaves managers with low discretion and flexibility, which acts as a safeguard against patronage. In contrast, political appointees are likely to have their professional orientation influenced by the appointing authority and exhibit greater turnover than civil service or merit systems (Hecló, 1975), because their tenure is pegged to the general elections cycle. It means for the appointees to remain on their posts it depends on whether the ruling party which gave them the public positions is in power or not.

When the ruling party loses elections it is likely that some of the politically appointed bureaucrats will not continue serving on their positions.

According to Obong'o (2015) when a government comes into power after being in opposition there is suspicion of the public service. To many of those politicians who have spent years in opposition there are perceptions that the top public servants will share the views of the previous government. As a result, changes in the top positions are necessary to enable the incoming regime to appoint people who not only understand them, meaning people of the same mind, but also people who would handle actual implementation of their policies and interests. These are the people who will provide the technical support and guidance to implement the policies on ground (Panainte, 2012). Obong'o (2015) argues that when a regime changes, there is a feeling among the public servants that they will be transferred to new locations, being assigned to projects that require traveling when they are unable to do so, creating parallel processes that marginalize their roles, or offering them promotions to new positions only to get them out of the way.

Political appointments in some countries such as Kenya have therefore been justified based regional balance, gender or affirmative action. Study done Obong'o (2015) reveals cases where people with low educational background and little experience were appointed to top public service positions based on convenience rather than 'merit'. The attitude of the respondents towards the appointments in the study were that it is pals who often get appointed, a practice which is common referred to by the middle and lower rank public servants as filling of positions based on "technical know-who" instead of "technical know-how" (Obong'o, 2015). There are mixed

feelings among public servants towards political appointments in the public service. To those who are in good terms with politicians in power they perceive it as an opportunity as they will be favored when it comes to promotions and transfers. While those appearing to be against the regime policies are transferred to new offices, roles being marginalized or offering “promotions” to new positions only to get them out of the way.

## **2.7 Effects of patronage appointments**

Patronage appointments' effects on public administration continue to be a debated topic among public management scholars, with no unified position on whether appointees or careerist bureaucrats have the best impact on public management (Panainte, 2012). Patronage appointments are believed to mostly have a negative impact on public policy, but attempts are made to prove certain positive effects. The neutral competence of bureaucrats, seen as the key to performance in the public sector (Hecllo, 1975) has been targeted by criticism seeking to accommodate the need for increased political responsiveness among bureaucrats. West (2005) claims that politics and administration are intertwined and in order to increase outcomes produced by the public sector there is a need for combining nonpartisan objectivity (characteristic for merit based systems) with responsiveness toward political appointees (typical for patronized systems). This view is supported by Lewis (2007) who argues that political appointees bring to government administration more energy, human capital and higher levels of education than careerists do. They also claim that appointees contribute to a better implementation of their political principals' agenda. Thus responsiveness is the outstanding advantage of patronage, as opposed to careerist bureaucrats, who, according to Dunleavy (1985) tends to make choices based

on their own preferences and orientations, thus diverging from the current political agenda. Having political appointees in executive positions may also help mitigate the lack of trust issue that many have in non-elected officials exercising political discretion (West, 2005).

Panainte (2012) distinguishes four categories of effects patronage appointments have: political consequences, institutional consequences, consequences on social policies and consequences on economic development.

To begin with, political consequences, scholars agree that across democracies and non-democracies political appointments are mainly used by politicians as a method to boost their political support by giving public jobs to loyal party members and individuals who support their political agendas (Remmer, 2007; Lewis, 2007). Even though patronage outcomes depend upon political systems, agency' design, culture, level of democracy, a set of political consequences can be widely observed in the following ways: politicized bureaucracies - where partisanship shapes policy choices and electoral manipulation with a clear advantage of the incumbent politician – that use of public resources for political party gains (Panainte, 2012).

Secondly, institutional consequences, according to Panainte (2012) the main difference between efficient and non-efficient bureaucracies is shelled in the personnel that runs the public service, and has less to do with other factors. In a patronized public sector politicians do not pay much if any attention to appointees' qualifications and knowledge. As the result the appointed officers do not meet the required skills level and in effect, the public policies delivered are neither efficient,

nor effective or economically advantageous. Similarly, appointees' policy choices are not based on evidence and record, but they rather define tasks from political principal's perspective, which may not be in the best interest of the population (Panainte, 2012). Sometimes the interest of political principal can be neglected as easily as public interest, manifesting as a principal – agent problem. Due to moral hazard and adverse selection in addition to the high level of discretion appointed managers have, they may tend to shirk their responsibilities and act on their own will and interest (Panainte, 2012).

Thirdly, consequences on social policy, patronage channels public resources to party's networks of supporters and clientele (Remmer, 2007). Evidences from Ghana in 1999 showed that the party in power allocated almost 30% more funding for schools in the areas where it had good results in parliamentary elections of 1996 (Miguel and Farhan, 2003). Similarly, in 2010, the Pakistan government protected from floods only districts that paid bribes to state officials, despite the considerable donations from the international community (Quiroz, Flores and Smith, 2010). Such policies even though they represent a powerful tool for incumbent governments, directly affect the quality of public goods delivered to citizens. This includes the unequal provision of education, health, justice, social security, and infrastructure, police, etc. which mainly are delivered to political supporters, and make citizens dependent upon patronage networks. From this it can be argued that social spending is correlated with patronage spending and depends on electoral competitions. Social spending increases before elections to expand political support, but decreases after elections, when bigger slices of the public budget are allocated for administrative costs (Remmer, 2007).

Lastly, Consequences on economic development, scholars agree on the adverse impact patronage has on state economy and welfare (Remmer 2007; Rauch and Evans, 2000). Corruption and nepotism are often used to characterize the effects of patronage, but a deeper look reveals other associated effects. Panainte (2012) argues that public sector is permanently expanding in terms of personnel size due to appointments and this affect public service's budgetary spending. Usually expansions take place after each electoral cycle, therefore, adding up on the existing number of civil servants. Remmer (2007) points out to Argentina's public sector, where until 2001 the public spending exceeded revenue growth, but the government continued to increase personnel spending because of patronage appointments thereby by increasing provincial employment by 40%. This led to Argentina's economic meltdown in 2001.

Growth is much dependent on governance, Rauch and Evans (1999) claim. They explored the connection between the quality of the bureaucracy and growth, proving that a bureaucratic system compiling Weber's characteristics determines positive growth, while the supply of patronage varies with poverty and inequality of electorate. A key reason behind this negative connection is that entrepreneurs avoid long term investments in countries with patronized public sector because of the corruption, unpredictable bureaucracy, and lack of transparency and reduced accountability (Rauch and Evans, 1999).

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter presented the general direction of the study through review of relevant literature. From the literature reviewed, it is observed that studies have been conducted on political influence in the management of public service human resources. No study has been done specifically to investigate the effects of political influence on career progress for civil servants. The chapter has also discussed the principal agent theory and politics administration dichotomy paradigm that have guided the study. The central message coming from this theoretical framework is that there are two actors in the management of public service and these are politicians and bureaucrats. The relationship between the politicians and bureaucrats determine on who gets appointed into a public office and how the appointees perform their duties. The next chapter presents and discusses the research design and methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the analytical framework of the study. It presents area of study, sampling techniques, sample size, methods and tools used to collect and analyze data, and lastly ethical considerations and limitations follow thereafter. The study employed a qualitative research method approach. This was done in order to explore and get detailed understanding of the issues which can only be established by talking directly with the people who are affected by this practice and allowing them to tell their stories freely. The analysis of the study findings begins with grouping the transcripts of interviews in order to understand the factors which influence political appointments in the civil service; attitudes of civil servants towards political appointment; effects of political influence on how civil servants execute their duties and effects of patronage appointments on career growth of civil servants.

#### **3.2 Area of study**

The study sample was composed of respondents from five (5) government ministries which were randomly sampled from a population of eighteen (18) government ministries. Random sampling was used to ensure that each ministry has an equal chance of being selected as subject. Each ministry was assigned a unique number on a piece of paper. The papers were placed in a bowl and mixed thoroughly. While blind-

folded, I then picked numbered tags from the bowl. All the pieces of paper which were picked bearing numbers were selected as the subjects for the study. The randomly sampled ministries were: firstly, ministry of lands, housing and urban development which has five major departments and these are housing, urban development, physical planning, land and survey; secondly, the ministry of gender, children, disability and social welfare. This ministry has five major departments as well and they are gender affairs, disability and elderly, children and social welfare. Thirdly, the ministry of home affairs and internal security which has five major department as well and they are immigration, police service, prison service, and national registration bureau and refugees unit. Last but one was the ministry of transport and public works which consists of buildings, road, maritime, rail and civil aviation departments. Lastly, it was the ministry of local government and rural development which is the overseer of all district councils and assembly.

Similar features among the sampled ministries are that they are all headed by cabinet ministers, followed by principal secretaries who are deputized by chief directors. Their departments are headed by directors or positions of equivalent grade to directors. The cabinet ministers are directly appointed by the state president and normally serve as political overheads of the ministries. The principal secretary, chief directors, directors and the deputy directors are all appointed by the president through the office of the chief secretary who is the head of the public service in Malawi. Principal Secretaries serve as technical heads and are responsible for managing technical activities of the ministries. The minister reports directly to the president while the principal secretaries report both to the responsible minister and the chief secretary to the government. Recruitment and promotion of staff in the ministries is

done through both merit system and political appointment depending on grade. Merit is applied to recruitment and promotion of all staff from grades F to N. All grades from C to E are recruited through appointments.

The only major difference among the sampled ministries is their core functions. For instance, the mandate of the Ministry of lands and urban development is to provide land and housing management services to the general public and all interested stakeholders/parties seeking these services while ministry of transport and public works is mandated to ensure the provision of effective and sustainable transport system.

Key informants consisted of individuals from the Department of Human Resource Management and Development (DHRMD); Office of President and Cabinet (OPC); Civil Service Trade Union; Parliamentary Appointment Committee (PAC) and Civil Service Commission. The key informants were chosen from these institutions in consideration of the roles which they play in relation to public service human resource management specifically on recruitment and promotion. For instance, only DHRMD can approve filling of vacant posts in the civil service; OPC is responsible for managing recruitment and promotion of all vacant positions which are filled through political appointment. PAC is mandated by parliament to vet and endorse appointments in the public service.

### **3.3 Sampling techniques and Sample size**

Purposive sampling was used to identify study participants from the randomly sampled government ministries. According to Fielding (2008) purposive sampling is a sampling method in which the units to be observed are selected based on the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative. In view of this, key informants and respondents were purposively sampled because of their relevance to the study's objectives. The study recruited civil servants at grade F/P5 and above to understand their attitudes towards the practice of political appointment in the Malawi civil service. They were also interviewed to understand how political influence has affected their career progress and the way civil servants execute their duties. As alluded to in chapter one it is at grade P5/F and above where civil servants can be beneficiaries or victims of political appointments. Hence, the study settled for P5/F and above officers rather than the rest of the other cadres to participate in this study. Respondents consisted of officers of different professionals such as managers, human resource management officers, finance and accounts officers, administrative and planning officers and technical staff.

The respondents were also of different grades such as Principal Secretaries, Directors, Deputy Directors, Deputy Secretaries, Undersecretaries and Assistant Director level officers in order to appreciate how both support and technical staffs at P5/F and above are affected by the practice of political appointments in the Malawi civil service.

### **3.3.1 Characteristics of the study sample**

Sarandakos (2005:170) argues that a “sample must be as large as necessary and as small as possible”. Considering the paradigm that guides the research in this case the qualitative research which does not require very large samples, the sample size was 45 composed of 10 key informants and 35 respondents. The key informants were chosen based on their roles in the civil service human resource management and development. 4 Key informants were from Department of Human Resources Management and Development (DHRMD), 2 from Office of President and Cabinet (OPC), 1 from Public Appointments Committee (PAC), 1 from State House (Human resource management unit), 1 from Civil Service Trade Union (CSTU), and last one from Civil Service Commission (CSC). Among the general 35 respondents there were 3 Principal Secretaries; 3 Chief Directors; 5 Directors; 1 Deputy Secretary; 6 Deputy Directors; 4 Assistant Directors; 3 Chief Human Resources Management Officers; 1 Chief Immigration Officer; 5 Undersecretaries and 4 Chief Accountants. These positions were selected because they fall within grade A and E and the position holders have served in those positions for more than four years. It means they are direct beneficiaries or victims of political appointments.

In chapter four the study participants have been given identity codes to ensure confidentiality. The aim is to offer anonymity to the informants. Thus, the 10 key informants have been identified as key Informant 1, key informant 2, key informant 3, and key informant 4 ..... up to key informant 10. Similarly, the 35 respondents have been identified as respondent 1, respondent 2, respondent 3, and respondent 4..... up to respondent 35.

### **3.4 Data collection Methods**

Interviews were used to collect data for the study. According to Silverman (2006:9) “often the desire to use multiple methods arises because you want to get at many aspects of a phenomenon. However, this may mean that you have not yet sufficiently narrowed down your topic”. Hence, the study settled to employ one method for data collection because the topic is sufficiently narrow. The interviews enabled access to detailed explanations as I was able to ask for more clarification and follow-up on issues raised by the study respondents. Key informants interviews and in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data from the purposively sampled respondents. These data collection techniques were chosen because the researcher thought that they can provide rich and contextual qualitative information relevant to the study.

#### **3.4.1 Key informants interviews**

Key informant interviews involved interviewing study participants who offered very specific knowledge on the practice of political appointments in the Malawi civil service. The purpose of the key informant interviews was to collect information from a wide range of people with specific knowledge about recruitment, promotions and appointment in the Malawi civil service.

#### **3.4.2 In-depth interviews**

During in-depth interviews, I had conversations with respondents which aimed at deeply exploring their point of view, feelings and perspectives regarding the practice of political appointments in the Malawi civil service.

Guided by the principal agent theory and politics and administration paradigm the study used open-ended questions. Interview schedules/guides were designed and used to collect data. These interview schedules helped the researcher to remain focused on the topics and they also acted as a standard for questions that were administered to all the research respondents. The only difference was the questions that were asked when probing the respondents to elaborate the responses. Notes were taken on issues that were raised in the face-to-face interviews while tape recording was used to fully capture the discussions. Recorded data was transcribed for those who accepted that their interview be audio recorded. For the key informants and respondents who refused audio recording of the interview only field notes were taken. Data collection was done from 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2017 to 20<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The transcripts of interviews were summarized using content analysis whereby data was isolated in themes being explored in the study. Themes emerged from the study objectives. According to Fielding (2008:335) “deciding what to code in an interview transcript or field note is a question of deciding what is or isn’t important and is usually guided by the purpose of the study”. In this study, data analysis involved a process of coding based on the objectives of the study.

Coding into semantically meaningful units was done on a variety of levels-word, phrase, sentence paragraph. This coding was done to come up with points from the study findings and not converting interview transcripts into numeric data. In this thesis, interview extracts are used to illustrate points the investigator pulled out from the study findings. The points respond to the study objectives.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Where information was collected from human beings in the study, I observed the following ethical principles: avoiding harm to subjects and researcher, informed consent, respect for privacy, safeguarding the confidentiality of data, and avoiding deceit and lying. To comply with the research ethics requirement on protection of participants' rights and ensuring that participation in the research did not jeopardize their employment in any way, it was ensured that the identity and dignity of respondents from the civil service was protected.

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

The main challenge in the study was that some respondents could potentially interpret the subject of research as sensitive. The research sought views from public servants who may have been victims of the system and risked being penalized for speaking out against the same system which employed them. As such they were uncomfortable with the face to face interviews thinking that they are being spied. For example, question 9 on the interview schedules was; in your opinion is there political or outside interference in hiring and promotions in the civil service? If yes explain. If no go to question 10. Some respondents were reluctant to elaborate more on this question because they thought that their feedback would be traced back to them. Perhaps the best approach could have been using questionnaires instead of oral interviews when collecting data on issues deemed sensitive. In this case the respondents could have answered to the question without the feeling that he or she is being observed. However, using a questionnaire could have limited me to collect contextual information needed to interpret the results. It is difficult to understand context of a phenomenon when using questionnaires.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the analytical framework of the study. It has presented the conceptualization of important terms in the study; outlined methods and tools which were used to collect data. In addition to that, it has presented sampling techniques employed in the study; sample size; and data analysis methods. It concludes by presenting ethics which were observed in the study and the study limitations. The next chapter presents and discusses the study findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **STUDY FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The chapter presents and discusses the field findings from the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Urban Development; Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare; Local Government and Rural Development; Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security; Ministry of Transport and Public works; Department of Human Resources and Management; Office of the President and Cabinet; Civil Service Trade Union; Civil Service Commission and Public Appointment Committee. The study findings focus on recruitment, promotions and how political influence has affected both the way civil servants execute duties and their career growth in the Malawi civil service. Specifically, the study interrogates factors which influence political appointments; examines the attitude of civil servants towards political appointment, the impact of patronage on the way civil servants execute their duties and lastly examine the impact of political interference in appointment on career growth for civil servants.

This chapter is divided into five main subsections. The first subsection examines recruitment processes in the civil service; the second subsection presents factors which influence political appointments in Malawi; the third subsection presents attitudes of public servants towards political appointments;

the fourth subsection examines how political influence affect the way civil servants perform their duties and lastly the fifth subsection presents how political interference in appointments affect civil servants' career growth.

## **4.2 Recruitment Processes in the Malawi civil service**

The Malawi government has several policies and legal documents which guide recruitment and selection processes of its employees. These are The Malawi Public Service Regulations (MPSR), Public Service Commission Regulations (PSCR), Acts of Parliament, and the Constitution of Malawi. Interviews and analysis of government documents revealed that there are two major ways through which civil servants at different grades are recruited in the Malawi civil service. These are merit based and presidential appointment systems (Malawi Government, 1991).

### **4.2.1 Merit based system of recruitment**

All civil service employees at grade P5/F and below are supposed to be recruited through a merit system. Merit is applied here to mean an open and competitive appointment system (McCourt, 2007). The Malawi public service relies on the Public Service Commission to recruit and promote officers. Public Service Commissions (PSCs) are independent bodies, with the responsibilities and authority often entrenched in the Constitution and Acts of Parliament, intended to ensure that the merit principle is observed in public recruitment and promotions and that the civil service is protected from patronage and unsuitable or unlawful political interference (Polidano and Manning, 1996).

According to Dzimbiri (2016) Malawi had one public service commission established in 1961 and modeled on the British system. However, with expanding of the Malawi public service, several service commissions were created. These are teaching services commission, civil service commission, health service commission, judicial service commission, police service commission, prison service commission. The commissions are empowered by the Constitution and Acts of parliament to appoint people, confirm them in appointment, discipline wrong doers and even remove them from the public service. The appropriate commission will receive information from a responsible officer of a ministry on vacancies to fill and number of people, qualifications, skills and experience required (Dzimbiri, 2016).

With merit system recruitment approach, the responsible officer in a ministry or department concerned identifies a vacant post or posts; prepares a comprehensive job description for the post(s); obtains government approval to fill the post(s); prepares a submission; sends the submission with a covering letter to the Appropriate Service Commission or Appointments and Disciplinary Committee (ADC) requesting for recruitment of staff. On receipt of the submission, the Commission carries out a recruitment exercise and after selecting successful candidates informs the responsible officer, who, in turn informs the successful candidate with all details regarding salary, duty station and other logistics. The Commission may also inform the candidate with congratulations that he or she was successful at the interview he/she attended (Malawi Government, 1991).

The Malawi constitution also empowers the Commissions to delegate some of their powers to ministerial Appointments and Disciplinary Committees (ADC's). If the

recruitment is being facilitated by Appointment and Disciplinary Committee, on receipt of the Submission from the Responsible officer, the Appointment and Disciplinary Committee (ADC) carries out a recruitment exercise and refers names of successful candidates and a full report of the whole exercise to the appropriate Service Commission for ratification. It is after this ratification that the ADC informs the Responsible Officer the results of the recruitment exercise, who in turn informs the successful candidate (s) accordingly (Malawi Government, 1991).

The recruitment of staff from Grade K to Grade F (P5) is done by the Service Commissions while recruitment of staff at Grades L and Grade M is done by Ministerial Appointments and Disciplinary committees. After selection process, the Committees (ADCs) refer the results to the appropriate Service Commission for ratification before releasing interview results (Malawi Government, 1991). All officers from grade N to P such as drivers, security guards, cleaners and messengers are recruited at the discretion of the management of the government ministry, department or agency.

#### **4.2.2 Political appointment**

Political appointment is simply understood as public appointments made by politicians (Allern et al, 2011). It involves selection of candidates to public sector positions based on considerations other than merit (Peters & Pierre, 2004). Individuals are nominated to a public position without going through a competitive selection processes. In the Malawi civil service, the power to appoint an individual into top government position usually rests with the president. The president has legal powers to appoint who so ever he or she wishes into a public office. Section 89 (b) of the

Malawi Constitution mandates the president to make such appointments as may be necessary in accordance with powers conferred upon him or her by the Constitution or an Act of Parliament (Malawi Government,1991).

It is the recruitment and promotion of senior staff at grades P6/ E and above which is subject to presidential appointment (Malawi Government, 1991). These positions include the chief secretary to the government (P1/A), principal secretaries (grade C), chief directors (grade C)<sup>2</sup>, directors (grade D2), deputy directors (grade D1), deputy secretaries (grade E), assistant directors (grade F) and all the top civil service positions with equivalent grades to these positions. Normally, whenever there is a vacant position that requires appointment in a ministry, a request to fill the vacant post is made to Department of Human Resources Management and Development. Only after getting the approval, a submission of proposed candidates to fill the vacant post together with their performance appraisal forms and Curriculum Vitals is made to Office of President and Cabinet. It is from the submitted list of candidates where an appointment to fill that position is made. When the ministry is submitting the names of the candidates there is room for it to recommend any candidate whom the responsible officer thinks should occupy the position. However, the final decision as to whether the recommended person is appointed rests with the president or the chief secretary to the government on behalf of the president<sup>3</sup>. Responsible officers or heads of government ministries, departments and agencies can only recommend serving civil servants for appointments. In a situation where the responsible officer does not have a qualified officer for the vacant position within the ministry, Office of President

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<sup>2</sup> Chief directors deputize principal secretaries

<sup>3</sup> Chief Secretary to the government is the head Malawi of the public service.

and Cabinet may decide to fill the vacant post with a candidate from outside the concerned ministry or even outside the civil service (Key Informant 1, 2017).

Political party leaders do make informal recommendations to the president as to who should be considered for appointments into top civil service positions. Individuals recommended by the politicians can either be serving civil service officers or non-serving individuals. The non-serving appointees normally serve in the civil service on contract basis and are more likely to be replaced when government administration changes after general elections. Recommended individuals by the ruling politicians are mostly done to place in strategic position individuals who can serve politicians' interests without any conflict of interest (Key Informant 2, 2017). For instance, when a certain cabinet minister was appointed as Minister for trade, industry and tourism he demanded replacement of the principal secretary and all senior management staff members. These officers were transferred and posted to other ministries and replaced by other officers preferred by the honorable minister (key informant 2, 2017).

In the Malawi civil service, the president can appointment any one he/she wishes but mostly relies on the recommendations of responsible officers and top ruling politicians to make appointment since he/she cannot be familiar with everybody at P6/E and above in the civil service. According to Lewis (2007) some political appointees, such as members of certain semi-independent institutions, have fixed terms in the civil service, but most serve at the pleasure of the appointing political leaders. Theoretically, political appointees can be removed at any time, with little or no notice, but they rarely are, except when the government administration changes. Even then, if the same party remains in power, some may stay on. Some political

appointees tend to have as much job security like any other career civil servants. It may be not usually the same job, but a job (Panainte, 2012). In the Malawi civil service, positions of Army Commander, Inspector general of Police, Director General for Immigration Services, Director for National Investigation Bureau, Chief Secretary to the government, Principal Secretary, Chief Directors and departmental heads are most offices which are affected by political appointments due to postings, transfers even removals as each new government administration comes in. According to Dzimbiri (2016), there has been an outcry that appointments of principal secretaries, directors, chief executives of parastatals, city and municipal councils and other senior public servants have always been politically influenced.

Though the President applying various laws may make appointments to various positions, there are certain positions which require vetting or endorsement by an independent body before the appointee formally takes over the office. Some of the institutions which vet, recommend and endorse appointments include public appointment committee (PAC)<sup>4</sup>, national assembly and judicial service commission. Examples of such public positions include the Law Commissioner; Inspector General for Malawi Police Service; Director of Public Prosecutions; Director General for Anti-Corruption Bureau; and Auditor General. For example, the Malawi Constitution states that:

“The law commission shall consist of a salaried Law Commissioner who shall be appointed by the president on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission... the Inspector General of police shall be appointed by the President and confirmed by the National Assembly by majority of the members present and voting.... appointment to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions shall be made by the

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<sup>4</sup> One of the parliamentary committees in the Malawi National Assembly and it is composed of members of parliament.

President and confirmed by the Public Appointments Committee”  
(Malawi Government, 2016)

Such constitution provisions demand vetting and endorsement by an independent body before an individual is formally appointed into a public office. As a result, they deter patronage appointment for certain top public positions. However, the existence of such provisions does not absolutely stop patronage appointments. For example, if a ruling party has the majority representation in the national assembly it is more likely that most of its proposed public appointments will be approved when presented before the parliamentarians for voting.

The Malawi constitution also empowers the president to make unmerited political appointments for certain public positions. These positions do not require independent body’s approval for the appointee to formally take over office. The public positions are filled by individuals preferred by the president. For example, Section 98(3) of the Malawi Constitution (2016) states that:

“Appointment of the Office of Attorney General shall be made by the president. The office of the Attorney General shall where it is held by a person employed in the public service, become vacant after the person holding that office has served for five years, or on his or her resignation or retirement or up to the end of the president’s term of office whichever is sooner” (Malawi Government, 2016).

In this case, the president is being empowered to appoint any individual of his or her interest to serve as attorney general. Other offices which the president is at liberty to appoint any one include reserve bank governor; director general for immigration services; commissioner for prison services; board members of various statutory corporations; chief secretary to the government; army Commander; principal secretaries; directors and deputy directors for government ministries and departments.

The president can appoint any individual into these positions without the appointment being vetted, recommended and endorsed by any institution. There has been an outcry from civil society organizations, opposition political parties, civil servants, media houses and political analysts that top public positions appointment which the President makes without being checked by independent bodies are politicized (Dzimhiri, 2016). The concern is that they are done based on patronage appointment compared to those which require independent body's endorsement after the appointment and before the appointee formally takes over office.

### **4.3 Factors that influence political appointments in the Malawi civil service**

This section examines factors which influence political appointments in the Malawi civil service. The factors include providing job opportunities to tribesmen, rewarding loyal political supporters, seeking loyalty, policy implementation and constitutional obligations.

#### **4.3.1 Personal linkages**

Political appointment is a practice in which a political party, after winning an election, gives government jobs to its supporters, friends and relatives as a reward for working toward victory, and as an encouragement to keep working for the party. 80% of the respondents believed that most political appointments are solely done to give jobs to family friends, former school/college mates, relatives and tribesmen. Politicians prefer to appoint their former political colleagues, friends and relations in top public positions (Undersecretary respondent 30, 2017). Obong'o (2015) argues that the appointment public offices that may not require expertise are the ones which are more highly politicized. These appointments are either to newly created positions to provide

job opportunities to former politicians, political allies and political activists or positions that were vacant.

The argument is that the appointments are done based on personal linkages. During face-to-face interviews with Directors, one of them stated that; “If a Principal Secretary is requested to recommend a name of an officer to fill a post by political appointment they usually go for officers who are either from their region or districts” (Director Respondent 10, 2017). A similar response came out during in-depth interviews with a Chief Human Resource Management Officer who noted;

“During Dr. Kamuzu Banda’s reign most top public positions were occupied by people from central region of Malawi. Since 1994 southern region has taken over due to coming into power of Dr. Bakali Muluzi, Dr Joyce Banda, and late Professor Bingu WA Mutharika as they were coming from this region. Recently we are seeing the lomwe people followed by the Yao belt benefiting more from political appointments than any other tribes” (CHRMO Respondent 23, 2017).<sup>5</sup>

Some of the respondents (15%) believed that pressures from communities on political leaders incite patronage appointments in the civil service. Communities where some politicians come from expect them to nominate or recommend their fellow kinsmen to the president or appointing authorities for public service positions appointment. In agreement with these assertions one Deputy Director stated;

“If you are occupying a top position in the civil service, friends and relatives expect you to recommend them to appointing authorities so that they can occupy top positions as well. As a result, when there is an opportunity to recommend an individual for appointment you can neglect a competent officer in order to please a fellow tribesman” (Deputy Director Respondent 13, 2017).

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<sup>5</sup> This assertion was not confirmed by the study as such it may require further investigation to validate it.

According to Diamond (2007), such appointments are aimed at maximizing politicians' probability for re-election. Recruitments based on personal linkages provide elected leaders with more sureness on the loyalty of the appointee (Gordin, 2001).

#### **4.3.2 Rewarding faithful political party affiliates**

Scherilis (2009) argues that usually being a party member or party supporter is the natural requisite for apolitical appointment in the civil service. Party elites would occupy senior positions of government whereas the rank and file would be compensated through bottom level jobs or award of contracts. All in all, party membership is the obvious criterion parties follow to select appointees, mainly because it signals political trustworthiness and loyalty. From this study, 27 out of 35 respondents believe that changes in the top public positions are done to reward people who helped the politicians to come to power. During in-depth interviews with Assistant Directors, when asked about motivations for political appointments in the Malawi civil service one of the noted;

“Political appointments are a token of appreciation to all the boys who worked hard for the president to win elections” (Assistant Director Respondent 19, 2017).

In agreement to the assertion key informant 2 from OPC noted that; “Political leaders have always tended to reward those persons who supported them during election period, although they have tried to apply possession of competence skills in the process of appointment” (Key Informant 2, 2017). Usually the support is in terms of providing financial and material resources during political campaigns for the president elect or even being involved in political campaigns activities indirectly. They do this by providing government resources such as vehicles for political activities. Ideally

civil servants are supposed to be politically neutral. However, some civil servants secretly participate in political activities by supporting politicians with financial resources (Assistant Director Respondent 19, 2017).

Though both theoretical and empirical suggest that some changes in the top civil service positions are done to reward individuals who supported the politicians to get into power, the aspect of individual qualification in some circumstances is also considered. Individual qualifications can be in terms of possession of competence skills on the appointee. Therefore, consideration for certain appointments to the top positions are being made with regards to both loyalty and qualification.

Similarly, 16 respondents in the study noted that political appointments are used to reward communities where the politicians come from and to win support from other regions as well. Political appointments serve as incentives to communities which supported the political party to come to power. This is a way of winning favors from communities to support the ruling political party in the next general elections.

“Malawi is divided into 4 administrative regions thus north, central, east and south. The situation since independence has been largely that the winner takes it all. As a result, the presidency has favored regions and communities that elected the office holder. Appointments to top positions in government have therefore been used to serve two distinct political purposes - rewarding the community which voted for the incumbent president and buying votes from other regions during elections” (Key Informant 3, 2017).

### 4.3.3 Seeking loyalty

The study establishes that some political appointments are done to ensure that the civil service's strategic positions are filled with people who will be loyal to the politicians. Some respondents felt that there is a tendency among politicians to surround themselves with public administrators who they feel will be very dedicated to them. When asked about motivations for political appointments in Malawi one of the study respondents at director level stated that;

“Politicians when in power they usually use public resources to sustain their political party agendas. As such they are involved in a number of activities to the extent of corrupting and rewarding each other contracts as a way of fundraising for party activities and political campaigns during general elections. Because of their hidden political agendas, they only need those who will be very trustworthy to surround them so that they are not exposed” (Director Respondent 7, 2017).

In support of this assertion Key Informant 5 from OPC stated;

“Political appointments are done to place persons in strategic government institution and positions so that they advance the interests of the appointing authorities. As a result, politicians prefer to work with people they know rather than strangers to ensure there is loyalty and no sabotage” (Key Informant 5, 2017).

During in depth interviews with Chief Directors one of them stated; “Politicians will always want to have their people at the top of the public service to spearhead their agendas. Each political regime has its own preferred people to appoint to various offices to protect their interests. The need for politicians to have their supporters in key positions of government explains better the existence of patronage appointment in the Malawi civil service” (Chief Director Respondent 4, 2017). The understanding is that when a president is elected during general elections would want to have a small coterie around him/her who he/she could trust to advise him, who are sympathetic to

his political goals and who can be relied upon to execute the president's decisions faithfully.

The argument put forward by the respondents is that when a new government comes into power, there is suspicion of some public servants. To many of those politicians who have spent years in opposition there is a perception that the top public servants will still share the views of the previous government. Therefore, when considering individuals for certain public appointments the uninspiring candidates are rejected in favor of an outsider known for his sympathy to the party in power to ensure uncompromised loyalty. In support of this assertion another respondent had to say;

“Political appointments are done for ruling politicians to be able to get access and control over public resources and to have public sector officials who can only do their command faithfully. That alone creates incentives for recruitment that sometimes overlooks or undermines merit. As a result when a politician is faced with two choices of people with the same qualification she/he would go for that person she/he will probably have enough... a lot more control over” (Undersecretary respondent 28, 2017).

The study establishes that political appointments are done to ensure that politicians are surrounded by people who are trustworthy and loyal bureaucrats who can perform their duties competently and also implement the demands of the ruling politicians faithfully without any conflict of interest. This concurs with the principal agent theory, theoretical framework guiding the study, which argues that a principal enters into agreement with an agent who can act on the principal's interests without conflict of interests (Moe, 2012). This explains why civil service appointments are mostly offered to people who are loyal to the politicians in power.

#### **4.3.4 Policy implementation**

According to Dahlstrom and Holmgren (2015), political parties search for highly qualified appointees if they are concerned with securing an efficient government. Because of the growing complexity of policy-making in a trans-national environment as well as the increasing heed voters pay to governmental competence can lead parties to prioritize the recruitment of experts in different fields of the administration. In that context, parties could find themselves in trouble to fill exclusively with their partisans those state positions for which a high level of expertise is required. Resorting to independent experts could therefore be an increasingly used means to fill in state positions (Dahlstrom & Holmgren, 2015).

In the study, there were also respondents who share Dahlstrom assertion. The respondents believed that changes in the top positions are necessary to enable the incoming regime to appoint people who not only understand them, meaning people of the same mind, but also people who would handle actual implementation of their policies and interests. These are the people who will provide the technical support and guidance to implement the policies on ground. This gives the impression that there are some appointments to the top positions in the public service which are made to bring on board the necessary expertise to manage policy formulation and implementation processes for the politicians in power. This concurs with Peters (2004) arguments that the objectives of political involvement in senior appointments can be based on bringing together specialized experts which can facilitate the regime's policy formulation and implementation processes. In view of this it can be argued that some changes in top public positions are done to put people in strategic places for easy policy implementation for the political party in power or to remove public officials

perceived to be against the regime policies. Key informant 10 from Civil Service Commission stated; “basically appointments are done to punish those who are perceived to be against the regime policies” (Key Informant 10, 2017). Ideally bureaucrats are supposed to be politically neutral in policy implementation. However, they are circumstances when bureaucrats sabotage ruling politicians’ policies due to their political affiliations.

The understanding in this argument is that politicians may appoint certain individuals to some top public service positions specifically to implement policies of the ruling party without any conflict of interest. This perspective on the politics of bureaucratic appointments can be summarized with a single hypothesis: The more the policy preferences of the appointing and sitting political principal diverge, the more likely a bureaucratic agent is to be replaced; and the more similar are the policy preferences of the appointing and sitting political principal, the more likely a bureaucratic agent is to be preserved (Dahlstrom & Holmgren, 2015)

#### **4.3.5 Constitutional obligations**

A few study respondents, 10% of study participants, felt that political appointments are necessary to fulfill constitutional obligations. They believed that certain appointments are done because the constitutional expects them to do so.

#### **4.4 Attitudes of civil servants towards political appointments**

The study accorded the respondents an opportunity to express their attitudes towards the practice of political appointments in the Malawi civil service. In this study, the investigator adopted Simmons’s definition of attitudes. Simmons (2008) noted that...

*“Attitudes imply evaluation and are concerned with how people feel about an issue”*

Questions about attitudes in data collection tool usually employ scales; a statement is made and individual are asked to indicate their level of agreement in a positive or negative direction (Ibid). In this study, a scale was not employed, instead the study participants were asked to describe freely their feelings about the practice of political appointments in the Malawi civil service. The scale was not used because the researcher felt its use would limit the respondents from explaining their feelings fully. When a key informant 3 was asked about their attitudes towards political appointment from the DHRMD stated;

“Newly elected president makes appointments to replace incumbents whom they have dismissed, sidelined or persuaded to resign to make way for people more acceptable to them. It is about appointing people the President considers will be loyal, and/or sympathetic with the policies of the new government, and/or can be trusted to harness public resources to achieve those ends. They will often be people who have previously worked with or for the president or ministers or their colleagues or are associated politically or in some other way with them”. (Key informant 3, 2017)

Just as people view everyday matters that they choose to discuss or debate from different angles, the same was observed on this issue. 65% of respondents feel that political appointment is an incentive to civil servants who are in good terms with politicians in power. It is bureaucrats who are connected to ruling politician who benefits on appointment into senior positions in the civil service. In addition to that, they also get posted and transferred to ‘fat’ government ministries, departments or agencies. They are labeled ‘fat’ ministries because they always get a large chunk of government funding and also receive financial support from donors. Such ministries include finance and economic development; education, science and technology; agriculture, irrigation and water development and gender, children, disability and social welfare. While bureaucrats who appear not to have personal linkages with

politicians tend to be appointed, posted and transferred to government ministries which get less funding and don't receive any donor support such as museums and antiquities. 35% of respondents perceive appointments as a way of punishing civil servants who appear not support the ruling political party through postings and transfer to give way to those in favour with the government of the day. Mostly a civil servant is perceived not to support the ruling government if they publicly criticize actions of the ruling politicians. There are times when ruling politicians demand public resources from government ministries such as vehicles for their political activities. If a controlling officer continuously denies them such requests, it may be perceived as if he/she is not supporting the government of the day. Ideally bureaucrats are supposed to be politically neutral, however, both theoretical and empirical evidences suggest that demands and pressure from top ruling politicians such as the president, cabinet ministers and senior ruling political party leaders forces bureaucrats to be involved in political activities such as providing government resources for political campaigns (Obong'o, 2015). Literature proves that it is not possible to separate politics from public administration (Demir, 1993).

From the research design, it was critical to seek views on the issues from independent sources outside the civil service, both as a way of corroborating the evidence from the civil service, but more as a way of enriching the data. During the face-to-face interviews, another respondent who said political considerations still play a major role in public service appointments was Key informant 10 from Civil Service Trade Union. He noted that;

“The merit-based recruitment is probably stronger in the middle and lower-middle cadres while at the very highest level like Principal Secretary its patronage” (Key Informant 10, 2017).

While key informant 8 from Public Appointment Committee from the Malawi National Assembly believes that influence is not just at the top, but it even penetrates down to the lowest levels. Key informant 8 stated;

“The President appoints the head of a public service according to his own preference; therefore, it’s purely a raw political decision. But then, when the head of a public service is appointed, the nature and the color of the rest of the public service take its skin from that person”. (Key Informant 8, 2017).

This assertion is a direct indication that political influence is not confined to the top levels only but also affects lower ranks too. You will find that who gets appointed, for example as the head of the public service; that person has got to meet the confidence of the President. The President appoints the head of a public service according to his own preference. When the head of a public service is appointed, the nature and the color of the rest of the public service take its skin from that person. And if that person was appointed politically, then the political influence that the person has then percolates down all the way. So, you’ll find that there are people, at even lower levels of the public service that are not openly exposed to politics, are having this strong political influence that started right at the top. And that political influence expresses itself either directly or indirectly, in all decision making, in all promotion making, in all other appointments, and in all discipline, and in all questions about who leaves and who remains in the government ministries, departments and agencies.

Politics plays a very key part in decision making about appointment and promotions specifically for the top positions in the civil service. The only major difference between the middle-level managers and the top-level leaders is their method of appointment to the public service. Whereas the top leaders are by law politically appointed, the middle-level managers are recruited through an open and competitive

system which is observed at least officially even if political considerations can come into play. Key Informant 8 from Civil Service Commission had mixed feelings towards the practice of political appointments in the Malawi civil service. The Commissioner stated that;

“Appointments and promotions have been based on “I know you” qualification in the Malawian civil service. Though attempts have been made to ensure that the candidates are scrutinized and vetted before appointed and promoted to ensure fairness for some top public positions, I cannot say it’s purely on a merit basis because of the other factors that come into play. For example, when people talk of quota system recruitment and if you have two individuals from the same region and who happened to be the only experts, some may be disadvantaged by the mere fact that the experts in this particular area happen to come from the same, and therefore, we pick a lesser qualified person from another region in order to appear accommodative in making appointments.” (Key Informant 8, 2017)

As much as it can be argued that there is favoritism and nepotism when making appointments into top public offices there is also a need to appreciate the context within which the appointments are made. The example of quota recruitment system given above poses a question as to whether a public position should be filled by appointing a lesser qualified person at the expense of a qualified person because we want to be inclusive? There is no watertight criterion to ensure that merit is strictly applied when it comes to promotion and appointment in the civil service but for the sake of progress and inclusiveness we must understand the rationale behind every political appointment.

When asked how best political appointments can be practiced in the Malawi civil service since there is a perception that political appointments are biased, key informant 7 from DHRMD proposed of creating independent bodies to recommend and confirm all the appointments in the civil service. Key Informant 7 noted that;

“Let’s have institutional bodies which can confirm and recommend an individual before appointed or removed from a top position to avoid patronage appointments in the civil service” (Key Informant 7, 2017).

During face to face interviews with Directors, all of them suggested the idea of establishing a body which can endorse presidential appointments. One of the directors noted that;

“As much as we agree that those mandated to make appointments can appoint anyone but it is surprising to see them appointing individuals who do not have the academic muscle required for that position. As such you see a public service full of people who cannot critically examine issues and who poorly deliver to the public. In order to ensure that right people occupies top positions in the civil service, I propose that government establishes an independent body to vet and confirm top appointments in the civil service” (Director respondent 11, 2017)

The idea to have institutional bodies to scrutinize political appointments is not new in the public service. In Kenya, the law allows the President to make top appointments to the public service. However, his/her role is restricted to nominating from a list of candidates who have gone through a competitive recruitment process to reduce political appointments based on political rewards and not on performance (Obong’o, 2015). In the Malawi public service, some institutions such as judicial service commission, public appointments committee and national assembly already vet, recommend and endorse appointments for certain public service positions. It is the judicial service commission which endorses appointment of judges while parliamentary service commission recommends for appointment of clerk of parliament and public appointments committee confirms appointments for heads of constitutional bodies such as director of anti- corruption bureau and auditor general. The Malawi constitution sections 122 (1) and 128 (1) respectively states that;

“Nominations for appointment to the office of ombudsman shall be received from the public by way of a public advertisement placed by the clerk to the National Assembly and the successful candidate shall be appointed by the Public Appointments Committee in accordance with the requirements of this section....A person appointed to the Office of Ombudsman shall serve a term of not more than five years, provided that the Public Appointments Committee may appoint that person for such further terms of five years as it considers appropriate unless that committee sooner terminates that appointment in accordance with this section” (Malawi Government, 2016).

It is constitutional provisions such as these which minimize patronage appointments in the public service. The provisions promote merit in the recruitment and promotion of top civil service positions. Furthermore, mandating the public service commission to vet, confirm, recommend and endorse appointments will ensure that the powers bestowed upon the President, as far as issues to do with political appointments is concerned, are to be exercised for the good of the country, not just for personal good as it will reduce patronage appointments. At a time when patronage was in its purest form of rewarding political support was being practiced in the United States of America, President George Washington rose above using public office to reward friends. Parton (1881:2) notes: “he demanded to be satisfied on three points with regard to the applicant for office: Is he honest? Is he capable? Does he have the confidence of his fellow citizens...friendship between the President and the applicant was absolutely an obstacle to his appointment, so fearful was the President being swayed by private motives.” The argument is that the President should therefore have public interest as the foremost motive for making appointments to the public service.

The empirical evidences suggest that widespread changes take place in the civil service each time there is a regime change. As such there is need to protect civil servants from ill intentions of politicians. The arguments put forward are for a

politically neutral public service where top and senior public servants are assumed to be professionally capable of serving government of the day, whatever its political complexion, and are therefore expected to continue in office when government or regime changes (Mulgan, 1999). That's what justifies the need for an independent body specifically to consider issues of appointments into the public offices. However, it should be noted that establishing new institution to vet, recommend and endorse appointments in the civil service will have cost implications. The government will have to spend on salaries for the human resource in the institution, motor vehicle maintenance costs and maybe office space rentals. Perhaps the most appropriate way would be to extend the mandate of the existing public service commissions from recruiting and promoting officers between grade F and Q only to vetting, recommending and endorsing political appointments as well.

#### **4.5 Effects of political influence on performance and career of civil servants**

It was important to appreciate how political influence interferes with the way appointed civil servants execute their duties. Politically appointed bureaucrats are not exempted from public service codes of conduct and regulation. This means when they act contrary to the expectations of the public service they are equally guilty. Krause, Lewis, & Douglas (2006:771) ask very pertinent question to this research "How do different means of selecting personnel systematically influence bureaucratic behavior?" They noted that the procedural mechanisms used to select agency officials can affect bureaucratic policy decision making. A politically appointed person must make decisions which will not stand against appointing authorities while a public servant recruited on merit usually exercises decision making a neutral manner because owes nobody a favor. In agreement with this assertion, Obong'o, (2015) argued that

political interests interfere with the ability of political appointees to be neutral and professionally execute the mandates of the positions they have been appointed to. However, Obong'o (ibid) noted that it is one thing to politically influence an appointment and a totally different thing to influence behavior. As such there is no guarantee that if one is appointed politically then it automatically follows that their behavior will be influenced by the appointing authority. It is possible to appoint competent people without going through an open and competitive recruitment procedure.

The study revealed mixed reactions on the effects of political appointments as far delivery of public services is concerned. There were those who felt that political appointments bring in new calibre of people with new skills and knowledge which improves the performance of the civil service. Another category thinks political appointments affect negatively service delivery if the appointees do not have individual competence skills for the job and if they are too loyal to appointing authorities. In support of the assertion that political appointments improve service delivery Key Informant 2 from OPC stated;

“Qualifications and experience of political appointees plays a crucial role in the delivery of services to the citizens. When right people with right qualifications and experience are appointed they contribute to improved service delivery. Again people with scarce skills and knowledge are sometimes brought into the civil service system through political appointment where they are able to make a difference.” (Key Informant 2, 2017)

Effects of patronage appointments on how civil servants execute their duties were identified in the study as follows: allegiance to appointing authority, biased

promotion, politicised working environment, poor service delivery as a result of inexperienced and unqualified appointees, and misuse of public resources.

#### **4.5.1 Direct allegiance to the appointing authority**

Empirical evidences suggest that some politically appointed bureaucrats usually serve the interest of the appointing authorities rather public's interests (Obong'o, 2015). This study established that the main concerns of political appointees are the priorities of their appointing authorities rather than the priorities of the ministry or department or the general public which they are meant to serve. This concurs with the study's theoretical framework, the principal agent theory, which argues that priorities of agents are usually those which benefit the principals. In this case, the priorities of appointees (agents) are those which serve the interests of their political masters-the political principals. This promotes mismanagement and abuse of government resources because the appointees want to please the appointing masters in fulfilling the political agendas of the appointing authorities. Key informant 4 from DHRMD noted;

“It becomes easier for ruling politicians to use any public funds designated for relief or public works for electoral purposes since public officers managing the resources are their subjects. This is against principles of professionalism in the civil service which forbade government officials from using public resources for political support” (Key Informant 4, 2017).

The argument put forward by the Key Informant 4 is that politicians use bureaucrats they have placed in strategic position within the civil service to access public resources for political party gains. For instance, since independence in Malawi ruling politicians have been using government vehicles to ferry people to political rallies. Civil society organizations and opposition party leaders have also lamented that the

Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, both government radio and television stations, functions in a way that market politicians in power and damage the image of the opposition political parties. The appointed bureaucrats may find it hard to refuse demands from ruling politicians because of their direct allegiance to the appointing politicians. The appointed bureaucrats would do anything for their political masters to demonstrate total allegiance.

#### **4.5.2 Compromised professionalism in the civil service**

The method of recruitment has important consequences on how the public service functions (Krause, Lewis and Douglas, 2007). Recruitment into the public service is hence not just for a career but also a profession. Professionalism in the public service implies a set of standard and a code of practice. Mulgan (2006) associates professionalism with the ability of public servants to give neutral advice to successive governments. Kaufman (2005: 1) defined neutral competence as “ability to do the work of government expertly and to do it according to explicit, objective standards rather than to personal or party or other obligations and loyalties”. Weimer (2005) defines neutral competence as carrying out constitutional policies made by the legitimate government effectively. According to Tan (2008) only merit recruitment system is intended to give all potentially qualified and deserving candidates an equal and fair opportunity of achieving success through their own personal efforts, which are usually a mixture of effort and talent, both innate and cultivated. Since merit based appointees are assumed to owe ‘nobody’ a favor they are expected to be neutral or non-partisan. Evidences suggest that political interests interfere with the ability of political appointees to be neutral and professionally execute the mandates of the

positions they have been appointed to (Obong'o, 2015). During face to face interviews with Principal Secretaries, one of them noted that;

“Some of political appointments in Malawi have been justified on the basis of regional balance, gender or affirmative action. There are cases where people with low educational background and little experience are appointed to top public service based on convenience rather than ‘merit’. It is pals who often get appointed, a practice which is common referred to by the middle and lower rank public servants as filling of positions based on “technical know-who” instead of ‘technical know-how”. The danger with this approach is that no matter how well qualified; the public servant appointed on the basis of political persuasion is placed in an ambiguous position as far as issues to do with professionalism are concerned within the public service” (Principal Secretary respondent 1, 2017)

The argument from the above assertion is that sometimes it is hard to be neutral and professional for political appointees when performing their duties. Once politicians have given you a top position in the civil service it is expected of you to dance their tune. Obong'o, (2015) argues that political interests interfere with the ability of political appointees to be neutral and professionally execute the mandates of the positions they have been appointed to. The argument put forward is that political influence in appointments lead to interference in execution of duties by political appointee to the extent of compromising professionalism in the civil service. As a result, civil service professional conduct is perceived to be sacrificed at the expense of personal and political concerns. Evidence, both theoretical and empirical, suggests that the performance of public officials is greatly determined by the institutional environment that they find themselves in (Dahlstrom and Holmgren, 2015).

### **4.5.3 Inefficiency in the delivery of public services**

When the government has the right people, and the right system, and the intentions, many good things are possible in the delivery of public services but the trick is to know which ones are they (Weimer, 2005). It is possible to appoint competent people without going through an open and competitive recruitment procedure. This study established that methods of appointment are aimed at producing a specific type of employee whereas; merit-based systems are expected to attract and satisfy appointing authorities that the best candidate is selected for a job. Patronage appointments make it possible for unqualified and incompetent personal to occupy senior positions in the civil service. This may negatively affect public service delivery. In addition to that, patronage appointments may also cause low morale among serving bureaucrats as results of the feeling that though they may work hard their efforts won't be appreciated. This can result into a laissez faire civil service. In support of this assertion chief immigration officer from ministry of home affairs noted;

“Each time the presidents are replacing head of immigration and citizenship department they pick from police service or other non-military departments. It is as if the department of immigration does not have competent officers within who can head the department. This frustrates most immigration officers” (CIO, respondent 25)

Department of immigration is headed by director general for immigration and citizenship services who is recruited through political appointment. Evidences suggests that ever since department of immigration was established, it is only in the year 2012 when an officer within the department was appointment to head it. All along heads of immigration department have been government officers from other governments departments and agencies. 20% of the respondents proposed that when filling a vacant post through appointment in a government ministry, department or agency priority should be given to officers within that ministry, department or agency before considering giving the post to

someone who does not work in the ministry or department concerned. This induces high work morale among the civil servants.

#### **4.5.4 Politicized working environment**

When asked about impact of political influence on how civil servants execute their duties, 55% of the respondents indicated that politically appointed bureaucrats tend to intimidate other civil servants. Political appointed officers tend to use political connections as a weapon for threatening who so ever appears to be against their way. During interviews with Under Secretaries, one respondent noted that;

“It is scary to work with some political appointees because some of them may appear as work colleagues within the government offices while they are spies” (Undersecretary respondent 30, 2017).

The study establishes that working with party loyalist creates an environment where people cannot work freely. Officers are afraid of being misinterpreted and appear as if they are working against the regime in power. During face to face interviews with Chief Accountants one of the noted;

“Ministers may direct procurement unit in the government ministries, departments and agencies to award business contracts to their relations. It will take courage to decline the directive.” (Chief Accountant respondent 32, 2017)

Failure to comply with the interests of politicians or any appearance against the interests of politicians in power attracts punishments. These include frontal assaults where bureaucrats are told in private to leave their posts and with refusals being met with threats of adversely affecting future recommendations and personnel records; sidelining; postings; transfers; non-renewal of contracts and even termination of

contracts for some civil servants. Such intimidating working environment and experiences may instill fear among the civil servants.

#### **4.5.5 Misappropriation of public funds**

According to 65% of the respondents, top civil service positions changes occur to create room for new appointees. At each electoral cycle it is expected that officers will be posted or transferred from one government ministry or department to another specifically when government administration changes. This brings tension among some senior bureaucrats as they are not sure as to whether the new regime will renew or terminate their contracts. Key informant 1 had to say;

“Each time government administration changes most top government officials work while half parked knowing that any time they can be transferred, posted or relieved their duties” (Key Informant 1, 2017).

The study established that the tendency of changing top public positions in the civil service when regime changes incite a behavior of stealing and abuse of public resources among civil servants. During face to face interviews with Directors one of the stated;

“As a result of uncertainty career, top public servants are not sure of what will happen next on their positions since each ruling political party has a tendency of appointing its own personnel in order to avoid sabotage. Therefore, individuals serving on top position in the public service may be corrupting, stealing and abusing public resources so that by the time they are being removed from the public position they have accumulated enough wealth to support their families...that’s what is it means to make hay while the sun is still shining to them”. (Director respondent 11, 2017)

The argument put forward is that there is fear among the political appointees that they can lose their jobs any time when regime changes. As the result some of them may opt to use public resources at their disposal for personal benefit. The idea is to accumulate wealth for their personal use once they are relieved their duties.

#### **4.5.6 Stagnation**

It was observed in the study that patronage appointments affect the speed at which bureaucrats' progress in their careers. Opinion of 57% of the respondents is that political appointments depend on recommendations from responsible officers and politicians. If an individual is not in good terms with the recommending officers or the politicians it is unlikely that the individual will be promoted. These respondents argue that it is individuals with political connections who progresses quickly in their careers to more senior positions compared with those who do not have connections. When asked about his reaction on effects of political appointments on the career growth of civil servants, Key informant 4 noted;

“There are some bureaucrats who have progressed too quickly in their careers because of their political connections and not performance”.  
(Key Informant 4, 2017)

In agreement to this assertion was a respondent who works as an Assistant Director;

“I have served on this post for 16 years. Most of my colleagues whom I started work with are serving as Principal Secretaries, Chief Directors while others holding senior positions in Embassies.... look at me there is no promotion yet I have both the academic qualification and experiences required for senior positions but no one sees me. I believe my colleagues rose quickly because someone added grease to accelerate their promotion” (Assistant Director respondent 21, 2017).

Patronage appointments make it possible for competent public officers to remain on a position without progress. Since patronage appointments are based on “I know you” it

means those who are not known are more unlikely to be appointed. Chief human resource management officer noted;

“One big challenge with this practice of politically appointing officers into top civil service positions is that proficient public servants who could have progressed to senior positions if promotion was on merit and performance appraisals basis stays one position for years –no promotion- because those in appointing authorities are not yet pleased with the officers for them to be considered for promotions.” (CHRMO respondent 26, 2017)

The argument from these assertions is that the practice of patronage appointment has made competent individuals to stick to their positions/grade. This is because for them to progress from one grade to another it only requires appointment and not merit. It means their promotion depends on whether appointing authorities are pleased with them or not. If the appointing authorities are not yet pleased with them, it means they must serve on that same position or grade for ages. So, one can find very competent senior people at below directorate level who never really make it to the Principal Secretary (Undersecretary respondent 30, 2017).

However, as much as it can be argued that some senior bureaucrats stagnate longer at position because of patronage appointments there is need to appreciate that recruitment and promotion of officers in the civil service depends on number of vacant posts to be filled. Therefore, it is possible to stay longer on a position because there is no vacant post to be filled and not necessarily because the appointing authorities are not interested with the bureaucrat.

#### **4.5.7 No job security for certain political appointees**

It was established in the study that some political appointees tend not to have job security. They can be removed from their positions anytime without any notice just at the wish of the president. For example, the Malawi constitution states that;

“A person holding the office of the Director of the Public Prosecutions may be removed from the office by the president before expiration of his or her term of the office...” (Malawi Government, 2016)

Heclo (1975) argues that political appointees are likely to have their professional orientation influenced by the appointing authority and exhibit greater turnover than civil servants working on positions recruited through merit systems because their tenure is pegged to the general elections cycle. This is manifested by unusual transfers and postings or hiring and firing of bureaucrats when government administration changes.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter discusses the study findings in view of study objectives. It examines the dominant motivations which lead to political appointments and assess the criteria adopted by appointing authorities to select appointees. It also presents impact of patronage appointments on the way civil servants execute their duties and on their career progress. It is evident from both the literature and study findings that public heads are more likely to be replaced following partisan shifts in government.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents major conclusions of the study, recommendations and area for further research. The study critically examines effects of political influence on performance and career progress for bureaucrats in Malawi. The focus is on examining factors that influence appointment, recruitment and promotion of senior civil servants; determining attitude of civil servants towards political appointments; analyzing effects of political influence on how politically appointed civil servants perform their duties and the examining effects of patronage appointments on the career growth for civil servants. The study has been guided by the principal agent relationship theory and politics administration dichotomy paradigm. It is a qualitative study in nature and data was collected through interviews.

#### **5.2 Major Conclusions**

Both theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that there is heavy political influence in the recruitment and promotion of top civil service officers. Two major issues were identified as main factors influencing patronage appointments in the Malawi civil service. Firstly, the study established that appointments in the civil service are geared towards placing individuals in strategic positions to facilitate implementation of policies for the regime in power. The rationale behind this thinking is that a party concerned with the implementation of its program will surely try to appoint the proper

and trustworthy personnel to be sure that the program is realized (Muller, 2006). The second factor is based on principal agent relationship arguments. At the centre of principal-agent theory is a relationship that exists between principals and agents (Moe, 2012). From this perspective, the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is understood as one of principal and agent whereby the politicians are the principals while the bureaucrats the agents. If the politicians are to recruit and promote bureaucrats through appointments, the political principals will generally strive to secure the most important decision-making positions for bureaucratic agents with common interests. As a result, appointing authority seeks the appointment of top public servants in whom they have trust, who broadly share the government's agenda, who are committed to getting things done. In addition to these main factors, political appointments in the Malawi civil service are used to provide job opportunities to family and friends. In some scenarios political appointments have been used as incentives to vote for the party and payoff for those who have proved loyal voters.

Scholars agree on the adverse impact patronage appointment has on state economy and welfare (Rauch and Evans, 2000; Remmer 2007; Kopecky, 2008). Corruption and nepotism are often used to characterize the effects of patronage, but a deeper look reveals other associated effects. Panainte (2012) argues that public sector is permanently expanding in terms of personnel size due to appointments and this affect public service's budgetary spending. Usually expansions take place after each electoral cycle, therefore, adding up on the existing number of civil servants. In addition to that patronized bureaucracies tend to channel public resources to party's networks of supporters and clientele (Remmer, 2007). According to Demir (1993), in a patronized public sector politicians do not pay much if any attention to appointees'

qualifications and knowledge. As the result the appointed officers do not meet the required skills level and in effect, the public policies delivered are neither efficient, nor effective or economically advantageous.

The study revealed mixed reactions on the effects of political appointments as far as delivery of public services is concerned. There were those who felt that political appointments bring in new calibre of people with new skills and knowledge which improves the performance of the civil service. Another category thinks political appointments affect negatively service delivery if the appointees do not have individual competence skills for the job and if they are too loyal to appointing authorities. Scherilis (2009) argues that by manipulating the screening and selection of managerial bureaucrats, political leaders can indirectly control the policy preferences that are carried out and enforced within a polity. Whatever policy conflicts that might exist between competing partisan coalitions will also be reflected in the politics of bureaucratic appointments. Such political interests interfere with the ability of politically appointed bureaucrats to be neutral and professionally execute the mandates of the positions they have been appointed to (Obong'o, 2015). There is also ample evidence, both theoretical and empirical, to suggest that the performance of public officials is greatly determined by the institutional environment that they find themselves in (Dahlstrom and Holmgren, 2015).

The study observed that politically appointed bureaucrats prioritize the interests of the appointing authorities rather than the priorities of the ministry or department or the general public which they are meant to serve. This concurs with the study's theoretical framework, the principal agent theory, which argues that priorities of

agents are usually those which benefit the principals. As such, appointees' policy choices are not based on evidence and record, but they rather define tasks from political principal's perspective, which may not be in the best interest of the population (Panainte, 2012). Furthermore, politically appointed bureaucrats tend to compromise professionalism when performing their duties. Public servants who are recruited based on merit are assumed to owe 'nobody' a favor. As such they are neutral or non-partisan in their duties. Evidences suggest that political interests interfere with the ability of the politically appointed bureaucrats to be neutral and professionally execute the mandates of the positions they have been appointed to (Obong'o, 2015). What political influence has done in the case of Malawi is that it has created public servants, who due to their political connections can ignore existing public service regulations and guidelines and get away with it. For instance, there are instances when the public servants abused public resources but were not held accountable for their actions.

Evidence suggests a high level of political influence on appointments to top public sector positions and a reasonable degree of influence on appointments and promotions in middle-level management in the Malawi civil service. Failure to comply with the interests of politicians or any appearance against the interests of politicians in power attracts punishments. These include frontal assaults where bureaucrats are told in private to leave their posts and with refusals being met with threats of adversely affecting future recommendations and personnel records; sidelining; postings; transfers; non-renewal of contracts and even termination of contracts for some civil servants. Politicized working environment instill fear among the civil servants. The civil

servants tend to fear that their actions can be misinterpreted and perceived as if they are working against the regime in power.

From the study findings it has been established that patronage appointments affect the way civil servants perform their duties and their career progress. It should be noted that, the focus of this thesis, when discussing appointments and promotion in the civil service, was not on lawfulness or competency but on how the method of appointment affects career progress of public service officers and how they perform their duties. In most cases, the study noted that the appointments and promotions, were mostly carried out as per the Constitution, and hence were legal. However, political influence is thus more appropriate because there are always political motives behind the appointments even though they are constitutional. This means that the study findings established in the study support both the literature and the theoretical framework presented in the study.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

This research suggests means of improving the practice of political appointments in the Malawi civil service. To begin with, there is a need to extend the mandate of public service commission to enable it vet, endorse and recommend recruitment and promotion of top bureaucrats in the civil office. This will ensure that patronage is not a dominant factor influencing senior civil servant appointments. Secondly, likewise in the private sector where senior positions are recruited through competitive criteria, all positions in the mainstream civil service should be recruited and promoted based on merit. New Public Management (NPM) movement calls for new ways of running governments just like business and reshaping the relations among politicians,

administrators, and citizens. And finally appointing authorities should recruit individuals who have competently served in the previous regimes in similar positions to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service.

In sum, the research highlights how political interference in the management of public service human resources can erode efficiency and professionalism in the civil service. To be effective the modern administrative state needs a corps of professional, continuing personnel who are competent at what they do and insulated from politics. Creating a corps of professional administrative officials, however, can make administrative officials more autonomous, hence, the need for politicians to check their actions. This thesis thus adds to a small but growing literature on the politics of bureaucratic appointments in the Malawi civil service.

#### **5.4 Area for further research**

This study recommends merit recruitment and promotion of all senior positions in the Malawi civil service. The proposal is to recruit all civil service officers on merit and not political appointments. As such there is need to study on the possibility of recruiting and promoting all senior civil service positions on merit only.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Interview schedules for the respondents**

1. When did you start working in the civil service?
2. What was your grade and position on your first appointment?
3. What is your current position?
4. How were you appointed to your current position?
5. How do you understand the term political appointment?
6. What motivates political appointments in the civil service in Malawi? (In your opinion)
7. What do you think qualifies an individual to be politically appointed into a top public office in the civil service?
8. How often officers are recruited through political appointments in your Ministry, Department or Agency?
9. In your opinion is there political or outside interference in hiring and promotions in the civil service? If NO go to question 10. If yes explain?
10. What is your views/attitude/perception in terms of how political appointments are done in the Malawian public service?
11. Do you think there can be a different in terms of service delivery between a public service which recruits its senior officers using political appointments and the one which recruits its senior officers on merit?
12. What do you think are some of the outcomes (positive and negative) of political appointments?

13. Would you say that there are effects (positive and negative) of political appointments specifically on the career progress for public servants? If NO go to question number 14. If yes, in what ways?
14. What do you think can be done to improve the practice of political appointments in the civil service? Would you say that politicians influence on the day to day management decisions of government ministries and departments is normal or very high or lacking?
15. Does this influence have a negative or positive impact on how appointees and other civil servants perform their duties?
16. Does this influence have a negative or positive impact on the progress of careers for the civil servants in Malawi?

## **Appendix 2: Interview schedules for the key informants**

For Office of President and Cabinet; Department of Human Resources and Management; Public Affairs Committee and Civil Service Trade Union

1. What is your mandate?
2. How directly are you involved in the issues of recruitment and promotions of civil servants (personnel administration)?
3. Briefly explain the appointment and promotion criteria in middle-level management in the public service pointing any influences and considerations both from within and outside the service?
4. Would you say that the method of appointment (political or merit based appointment) to the top leadership positions has influenced the calibre of leaders occupying these positions? Briefly explain.
5. In your opinion is the appointment and promotion to senior positions in public sector based on merit, on political influence or other forms of patronage? Why do you think so?
6. Is there Legislation in the country establishing hiring and promotions in the civil service? If your answer is NO proceed to question 7, if your answer is YES elaborate below. If yes, is that legislation or policy always followed, please explain briefly why or why not?
7. Are public servants adequately trained to meet the demands of their positions after appointments are made?
8. Would you say that politicians influence on the day to day management decisions of government ministries and departments is normal or very high or lacking?
9. Does this influence have a negative or positive impact on how appointees and other civil servants discharge their duties?

10. Does this influence have a negative or positive impact on the progress of careers for the civil servants in Malawi?