

**PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION IN THE PROVISION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN
MALAWI**

PhD (Sociology) Thesis

By

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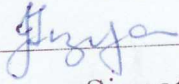
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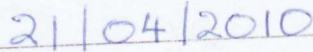
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I the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the two gifts that the Almighty God gave me, my daughters, Tendai and Tariro. For your sake I have worked this hard to be your role model and an exemplary mother.

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ABSTRACT

This study was done in the South Eastern Education Division and it aimed at assessing community participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi by examining community involvement in the operations of distance education centres (DECs) and community day secondary schools (CDSS). The following specific objectives guided the study:

- To investigate the Ministry's and the people's understanding of the concept of CDSS;
- To identify the source of the initiative to establish DECs in the areas;
- To characterize the nature of community participation in the establishment of the DECs;
- To determine the level of community participation in the management of the DECs;
- To investigate changes, if any, in community participation brought in by the change in status from DECs to CDSSs.

The study employed qualitative methods for data collection through key-informant-interviews with school personnel and community members, and focus group discussions with students and community members; and observing the situation that prevailed in the schools visited. Six schools were purposively selected due to their location, to represent the rural and urban/semi-urban factors and their accessibility by car. The District Managers in the districts where the schools were located and officials from the Ministry Headquarters and the Malawi College of Distance Education were also interviewed.

The major findings of this study were that the concept of CDSS was fully understood by officials from the Ministry of Education Headquarters but as we moved down the hierarchy of education offices the concept was not as fully articulated since the different levels emphasized different aspects of the concept according to the functions of their offices. The concept became more and more diluted as we moved down to the communities until in some groups it was not known at all.

It was established that DEC's were established through community initiatives and communities were involved in infrastructure development and their running through school committees. However, the way the DEC's were run varied from centre to centre as there seemed to be no

supervision from education authorities after their establishment. The conversion of DEC to CDSS brought major changes in community participation in the activities of CDSSs. The major areas in which the communities participated were taken over by government as entry to CDSS was by government selection and all the fees paid by pupils went to government, depriving school committees of funds to carry out development projects.

The conclusion reached by this study was that community participation had played a major role in the provision of secondary education in Malawi. However, the participation ranged between non-participation and token participation. There was no deliberate effort by government to empower communities to achieve genuine participation which would make communities partners with government in decision making, hence the change from DEC to CDSS without proper consultation with communities and this brought in problems of community participation in CDSS.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAMPFIRE	Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CSS	Conventional Secondary School
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DC	District Commissioner
DEC	Distance Education Centre
DEM	District Education Manager
DEO	District Education Officer
DHM	Deputy Headmaster
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GVH	Group Village Head
HM	Headmaster
HQ	Headquarters
LEPRA	Leprosy Relief Association
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MCC	Malawi Correspondence College
MCCC	Malawi Correspondence College Centre
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education

MP	Member of Parliament
MZRDP	Mid-Zambezi Rural Development Project
NGO(s)	Non-governmental Organization(s)
PAP	Poverty Alleviation Programme
PEO	Principal Education Officer
PIF	Policy and Investment Framework
PTA	Parents' Teachers' Association
SDNP	Sustainable Development Networking Programme
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TA	Traditional Authority
TRF	Textbook Revolving Fund
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VH	Village Head

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Participatory Development as an Emerging Development Paradigm

Participatory development is an emerging development paradigm focusing on access to and control over the use of resources. Participatory approaches to development emerged from a long history of frustration with failed top-down development. The approach has become a means to incorporate civil society into the decisions formerly reserved for state agents. It stands for partnership that is built upon the basis of a dialogue among the various actors or stakeholders, during which the development agenda is set jointly, and local views and indigenous knowledge, are deliberately sought and respected. This implies negotiation rather than dominance of an externally set project agenda. Thus people become assertive actors instead of being passive recipients or simply beneficiaries. The approach adopts community participation as a means, and sometimes as the end, to implementation of a variety of development initiatives (Vainio-Mattila, 1997; Ribot, 2000; Kusakari and Yajima, 2001).

Thomson (1955) noted that during the colonial era in Malawi, self-help was not greatly encouraged. However, from the time Malawi became independent in 1964 to this day, the improvement of rural living standards has remained the major preoccupation of the government. The government realized that it could not do this alone and therefore this improvement would largely have to be carried out by the people themselves and community development was the chosen strategy for this (Ministry of Health and Community Development, 1969). In the construction of buildings the standard community participation involved the provision of free labour to clear the site, to mould and fire bricks, collect sand and carry building materials to the construction site (Kishindo, 1989). The content and subject matter of the Community Development Department was to reflect the basic needs of the rural people. Much of the community development effort went into the creation of social and economic infrastructure. As a result, a strong tradition of community building projects developed, and among these projects, were school blocks, dispensaries or health centres, community centres, postal agencies, markets and roads. It is in this spirit of self-help that many distance education centres came into being in Malawi, especially in the rural areas.

The definition of community development followed by the Malawi Government was that drawn up by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1956. Community development is described as the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of

governmental authorities to improve the economic, social, and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and enable them to contribute fully to national progress. This process has two elements: the participation by the people themselves in efforts to improve their living conditions, and the provision of technical and other services in ways that encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help and make these effective (Ministry of Health and Community Development, 1969).

Following the transition to multiparty democracy, perspectives to poverty and the approach to community development changed. The development focus shifted from the top-down approach to a bottom-up approach that gave communities the opportunity and power to make choices and to participate more fully in their development through the introduction of the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF). This approach enabled communities to manage their projects including the project funds (Alberts et al, 2006).

Enhancing Participation in Development

Community participation does not just happen but it has to be worked on. Some development agencies and experts have documented some success stories with participatory development and have formulated some guiding principles to achieve that. They have come up with two broad ways of promoting popular participation in

development projects, namely, empowering the rural poor and adapting administration to participatory development.

Empowering People

Chinsinga (2003) notes that the creation and development of local organization is important in the assertion of community rights to development. This view is shared by Platteau and Abraham (2002) who see such organization as important in working against dependency and bringing community awareness of their rights and collective strength to act as a pressure group in negotiating the process of development.

Mathur (1986) observed that community contributions in either cash or kind are a good indicator of their commitment to the development project. Such resource commitment shows that people understand both their role and that of government in the project. Ahmed (1978) subscribes to the same idea by noting that when people contribute something, they will feel more concerned than otherwise might be and that such a commitment will provide a concrete indication of how interested the community members are in the new initiative.

For participation to achieve its purpose, it should be self-sustaining. To this effect, Marthur (1986) and Chinsinga (2003) point out the importance of skills, knowledge and information in sustaining

participation. Mehta (2000) identifies some of the major skills necessary for building local capacity for participation as managerial skills, internal organizational management skills, technical skills and political skills.

Mathur (1986), however, noted that local organizations for the poor do not exist everywhere and where they do, they are not in very good shape. There is, therefore, a tendency to set up new organizations and dismiss the existing traditional organizations and networks as of no particular relevance to development but Kishindo (1989) indicates that indigenous organizations can prove to be far more dynamic in mobilizing people to join hands with official agencies in the promotion of various development programmes.

Kumar and Corbridge (2002) illustrate how projects may fail to benefit the target group due to the failure to recognize indigenous or traditional organizations. They describe a farming systems project in India which was performing extremely well and was well regarded by many villagers but failed to secure meaningful participation of the poorest in its groups. It enhanced mainly the social capital of the richest villagers but in a fashion that could encourage dependence upon the project's staff or infrastructure. They attributed this failure to the inability of its community organizers to work through existing village leaders and to acknowledge the problems that the poorest villagers faced in making their voices heard. The community

organizers preferred to work with the more educated villagers and dismissed the more disadvantaged communities which they viewed as more difficult to work with due to their life styles of drinking, eating and quarrelling among themselves and lack of interest in group activities.

Adapting Administration to Participatory Development

It is observed that both administrators and people confront some dilemmas in terms of access, responsiveness, professionalism and effectiveness. This is due to the fact that the administrators and the people do not view the participatory process alike. One way to streamline their divergent views is to view participation as a learning process, as mutual interaction. Marthur (1986) and Platteau and Abraham (2002) view participation as a process, not an outcome, and also as an ideal toward which practices should be adjusted. Miraftab (2003) agrees with the above view and says that meaningful institutionalization of participation should not be viewed as a one-time act or a bundle of rights to be handed over but rather a process that requires constant vigilance.

Abraham (2002) indicates the importance of adapting administration to participatory development at all levels of government while Chinsinga (2003) calls for the change of attitudes of the field staff so that they see their task as responding to the needs of the

people rather than expect people to respond meekly to government initiatives.

It has been observed that sometimes an adequate representation of the poor is not easy to achieve in order to protect their interests. Tendler (1997) suggests that it is possible to protect the poor people's interests in decision-making bodies by introducing heterogeneity into elite influence on local government. This is achieved by ensuring that the representation of the elites is sufficiently diversified for a division of opinion to develop among them.

Since power is often vested in the government or development agency, it is important that devolution of power takes place and that community structures are assisted to build capacity to handle such power. This is a process that needs patience and willingness on both partners (Mathur, 1986).

Background to the Study

History indicates that missionary groups pioneered the provision of formal school education in Malawi from 1875 when the Livingstonia Mission started the first school at Cape Maclear. Missionary groups that followed Livingstonia followed the Livingstonia example and started more schools. The missionary groups involved were the Church of Scotland, the Universities Mission to Central Africa, the

Dutch Reformed Church Mission, and the Zambezi Industrial Mission (Pachai, 1973).

The aim behind missionary education was to fulfill Livingstone's appeal and prayer that Africa needed Christianity and commerce to stamp out the evils of war and slave trade. The general view of all the missions in the country was that education was to subserve Christianity. Education was to be at the very centre of the primary plan of Christian missions. Among the Protestant missionaries, the prime objective was evangelization. This objective could be adequately fulfilled if people could read the Bible for themselves in order to know more about God. Therefore, literacy was important in this respect and education was used as a means to an evangelical end. Secondary and tertiary education was considered not necessary for the African converts as this was thought to spoil their simplicity (Banda, 1982).

In the first twenty-five years of missionary education in Malawi, the missionaries provided education without any government assistance. Their activities were fragmented, without a central body to provide direction or guidance. Without such a central body, the government found an excuse for not assisting the missionaries because there was no unified system or entry point to discuss issues of policy.

The first attempt to have such a body was in 1900 when four missions met in conference at Livingstonia and agreed to have a common education code. The code was discussed for the second time at a mission conference in Blantyre in 1904 and then published in 1905 under the title "Central Africa United Educational Missionary Institutions". It was revised in 1910 at a third missionary conference whose members identified themselves as the Federated Missions and comprised the following: the Church of Scotland Mission, Livingstonia Mission, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, the South African General Mission, the Zambezi Industrial Mission and the Nyasa Industrial Mission. In the same year a Consultative Board was set up which became the executive arm of the Federated Missions. This Board was recognized by government and this removed the reason that government had given for not assisting the missionaries. Government made its first contribution of 1,000 pounds to education in 1907, but this was inadequate. The grant was to be shared among all the missions subscribing to the code in proportion to their educational work. Although the grant was increased to 2,000 pounds from 1920, it was still nominal. The government continued to pay this amount up to 1926.

After the end of the First World War, a lot of attention was given to education in the colonies and protectorates. International and colonial pressure was responsible for this. The British Government set up an Advisory Committee on African Education in British Tropical

Africa in 1923 to look into educational changes and in 1924 this Committee worked together with the Phelps-Stokes Committee which visited Malawi (then Nyasaland) to study and report on the educational system and facilities. In their report, the Commission recommended, inter alia, that there was need for government to establish a Department of Education headed by a Director and that government should provide some additional financial support to the Missions. Following this recommendation, the Department of Education came into being and the annual grants to Missions increased to 8,590.28 pounds in 1927 although government contribution was still very small compared to what Missions were recorded to have spent (Banda, 1982).

Despite the government taking over control of education through the Department of Education, provision remained at primary level, with thousands of village schools, but not a single secondary school. However, some Malawians had been privileged to acquire secondary education outside the country through their mission churches. It took some of these educated Malawians like Levi Zililo Mumba in 1933, through the North Nyasa Native Association, and members of the Nyasaland Teachers' Association in the 1940s to express the need for higher education for the African, and to pressurize government to meet this need, but the government was slow in responding. It was the missionaries who quickly responded to this outcry in 1937. As Federated Missions, they agreed to build a secondary school under the

auspices of the Protestant Missions if the government would agree to maintain it. In 1940, Blantyre Secondary School was established under the auspices of the protestant Federated Missions. Two years later, in 1942, the Catholics opened Zomba Catholic Secondary School.

The opening of the two schools increased people's desire for further education. Missionaries played their part by opening junior secondary schools while the government also, although under financial constraints, slowly increased the number of its schools. The Development Plan for 1957/61 provided for twelve junior secondary schools with an annual output of 360 pupils. Dedza Government Secondary School opened in 1951 and Mzuzu Government Secondary School in 1959. However, secondary education in Malawi continued to be ignored or discouraged during the colonial government. The government did not see any real reason to give the African any advanced learning. This might have been due to the suspicion aroused by the Chilembwe uprising in 1915. The colonial government might have feared that if they gave more education to the African, there would be more Africans who would be as critical of the colonial government as Chilembwe was.

The Reverend John Chilembwe was an orthodox Baptist educator and an early figure to resist colonialism in Nyasaland (now Malawi). He had attended the Church of Scotland Mission from around 1890

but from 1892, he entered the domestic staff of Joseph Booth, a Baptist Missionary who was critical of the Scottish Presbyterian missions in Nyasaland. Booth's teaching focused on equality, a radical idea in colonial Africa. In 1897, Chilembwe travelled with Booth to Lynchburg, Virginia where he attended Virginia Theological College and was exposed to works of abolitionists like Booker T. Washington and others. When he came back to Nyasaland, he founded the Providence Industrial Mission which developed seven schools. He tried to instill values of hard-work, self-respect and self help in his community.

During the famine of 1913 in Mozambique, many people from Mozambique moved to Nyasaland where they worked in plantations together with people of Nyasaland. Chilembwe was upset by the way his parishioners and the refugees were exploited by plantation owners. Workers were beaten and denied wages. Chilembwe was also affected by the conscription of local men to fight for Britain in Tanzania against the Germans in World War 1, a war which did not benefit the men immediately. He complained of racism and exploitation which led him to stage an uprising on January 23 1915. He wrote letters to neighbouring districts of Zomba and Ntcheu, encouraging them to do the same but due to slow communication his word did not arrive in time. His word arrived late after the authorities had already known about the plot and therefore his plot failed to accomplish much (Shepperson and Price, 2000).

Another reason could have been that of limited resources since missions did not see it as their duty to give Africans advanced education while the government was finding it difficult to provide adequately for the primary education that was fast expanding (Banda 1982). However, with the change of government in 1961 from a colonial to an elected government, things began to change. The Department of Education became the Ministry of Education headed by a Minister. It became government policy to expand education for the purpose of development. Development plans and policies have shown that since that time, education has remained one of the top three priorities in development.

The Development Plan for 1962 to 1965 clearly acknowledged that the bottleneck in the educational programme was secondary education and this needed to be tackled urgently and on the widest possible scale. To that effect, it proposed that within the education sector, the largest proportion of funds available should go to secondary education. On attainment of independence in 1964, the Malawi Government continued to recognize education as one of the key areas needing attention in order to accelerate the pace of national development. The government opened more schools and by 1968, each district had a secondary school and the existing secondary schools were expanded. A government girls' secondary school, the first of its kind, opened in Lilongwe in 1963 (Pachai, 1973; Banda, 1982; Office

of the President and Cabinet, 1971 and 1987; Malawi Government, 1964).

Selection into Secondary School

Selection into government and grant-aided secondary schools in Malawi is determined by the Malawi Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination, which allows about 10% of those who sit the examination to obtain secondary school places in conventional government secondary schools (Lewin, 2001). This means that 90% of those who sit for primary school leaving examinations are left out although most of them qualify for secondary education. This being the case, the government, with technical assistance from the New Zealand Government, opened the Malawi Correspondence College (MCC) in 1965 to provide secondary education to primary school leavers who could not make it to the established secondary schools, given that even after expansion of the existing schools, only 10% of the primary leavers could find places (Banda, 1982).

When MCC was established, it was to operate night secondary schools to offer secondary school learning opportunities by distance learning to those that for one reason or another could not be enrolled in other types of education. The night schools were already in existence when MCC came into being. These normally operated in the established government secondary schools but due to overwhelming demand in secondary education, MCC was forced, in 1967, to open

centres known as Malawi Correspondence College Centres (MCCCs) where students could meet and study under teacher supervision. Community participation was required as "at each approved Centre the local community will be responsible for providing classroom accommodation and furniture. One classroom will be required in 1967 and a second classroom in 1968" (Ministry Circular 5/66 24th February 1966, paragraph 3). This gave an opportunity for secondary education to many who were not near conventional secondary schools. When MCC changed to Malawi College of Distance Education, its centres changed to Distance Education Centres (DECs).

DECs were in two categories, namely, those operating in their own premises like any other school in terms of hours and those that operated from borrowed premises, usually primary school buildings, and started their day after the primary school day was over. For those that had their own premises, the circular indicated that "centres will operate on a full-time basis with teachers supervising and guiding pupils on their work on the Correspondence College Course" (Ministry Circular 5/66 24th February 1966, paragraph 8). Some of those that had their own premises operated boarding facilities. DECs, therefore, were institutions set up by communities to provide the face-to-face component in distance education where instructions included supervision of students, counseling and time to listen to radio programmes in groups.

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2006) shows that at any one point since 1964, primary enrolment had been several times higher than secondary enrolment and that the enrolment in the MCDE had been increasing at a much faster rate than that of conventional secondary schools since its establishment in 1965 up to 2001 when all the students enrolled by MCDE phased out. The figures for selected years below will illustrate this.

Table 1: Enrolment for primary, secondary and MCDE for selected years between 1964 and 2001.

Year	Primary	Secondary	MCDE
1964	359841	5951	-----
1973/74	537301	13770	3601
1983/84	847157	22245	8704
1993/94	1895423	46444	42308
2001	3187835	57635	118617

Source: EMIS Annual Statistics 2006:5

The recognized categories of secondary schools in Malawi as of 1997 were government boarding, where boarding was provided at normal cost to pupils. Government regulated the fees in these schools. The second category was government day schools, where boarding was very common but was partly financed from fees. The running and financing of the boarding was in the hands of the community. Thirdly there were grant-aided schools, which received a government subsidy related to school size, had salaries of government teachers paid, and

charged fees to cover other costs, including boarding. Government supported schools were given the name conventional secondary schools (CSS). These were/are the most privileged schools with regard to educational infrastructure and quality of teaching staff (Ministry of Education Science and Technology and Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). These are distinguished from those schools formerly organized by MCDE, which are now called Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS). CDSSs are the most disadvantaged in terms of resources and quality of teaching staff (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Malawi commission for UNESCO 2008). Recognition is made of the existence of private secondary schools whose number is not easy to determine since many are likely to be unregistered (Lewin, 2001). These are schools run by private entrepreneurs with no subsidy from government. Although there are some private schools that are well provided for, especially those run by church organizations and formerly run as grant aided schools, the majority of the private secondary schools are comparable to CDSS, in terms of the available teaching and learning resources (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Malawi Commission for UNESCO 2008). The different categories and their enrolments as of 1997, just before DEC's were declared CDSSs were as follows:

Table 2: School type by number and enrolment, 1997

Type of school	CSS day	CSS Boarding	CSS Govt. – aided	National Boarding	Govt. Total	MCDE	Private	Total
No. of Schools	23	33	27	4	87	401	137	
Enrolment	17,429	15 000	10,000	1,500	43,929	108,846	21712	174487

Source: Lewin, 2001

The table above shows that MCDE enrolment was more than twice that of conventional secondary schools. Table 3 below shows a comparison of enrolment in conventional government schools, community day secondary schools and private schools.

Table 3: Total enrolment for government, community day and private secondary schools for 1997 to 2000.

Year/Type of school	Government	DEC/CDSS	Private
1997	43 929	109 846	27 712
1998	38584	132 445	21 243
1999	58714	166 781	17 245
2000	30880	117 783	15 796

Source: Education Basic Statistics 2000:74

The table shows that CDSSs absorb a much greater proportion of secondary school students than any other type of school. The figures for 2000 show a reduction in enrolment for all the types of schools but no explanation has been given for this. The trend was still the same

according to a more recent study (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, 2008) as table 4 below shows.

Table 4: Enrolment comparison between conventional and community day secondary schools as of 2007

Type of school	CSS	CDSS
No. of schools	96	575
Enrolment	42734	99172

Compiled from: a report by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Malawi Commission for UNESCO (2008).

Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs)

The history of CDSSs can be traced to the establishment of the Malawi Correspondence College in 1965 under the corporate name Malawi Correspondence College (MCC) and Schools Broadcasting Unit (SBU). As demand for secondary education continued to increase, the government, with technical assistance from the New Zealand Government, opened the Malawi Correspondence College which was given the responsibility to provide education by distance to students who could not attend conventional schools for various reasons. In 1972 the two units merged and the name of the college was changed to Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) (Laymaman, 2001).

The review of documents which established the MCC indicates that community participation was necessary in the establishment, growth and development of its centres. Ministry circular 3/6 Ref. No. 1/72/55 dated 15th January 1964 called upon Members of the Legislative Assembly, District Councilors, proprietors of schools, leaders of the Malawi Congress Party and the community as a whole to give full support to the establishment of night secondary schools in their areas. Committees served by these night secondary schools were encouraged to organize subscriptions to supplement what the government would offer. This circular defined the different levels of the community that needed to be involved in the task. Community here seems to refer to the people and organizations operating around the school.

Documents from MCDE (MCDE, 1998 and 2000) indicated that the MCC was originally planned to enroll 1,000 students per year but enrolment grew to 10, 000 in the first year and reached 35,000 by 1975. This rapid increase in enrolment of students necessitated the establishment of DEC's where distance learners met for study purposes. By 1998 the College had an enrolment of 150,000, which included 5,000 Home Study Students. Home Study Students were those students who enrolled with MCDE but did private study at home without enrolling at a DEC or night secondary school. The College had 520 DEC's and 44 night secondary schools where more than 2,000 teachers assisted students to acquire secondary education.

DECs were institutions set up by communities to provide the face-to-face component in distance education. The communities, however, did not understand the philosophy of distance education and demanded that their children receive direct instruction as students in conventional secondary schools did, but these centres were staffed with under-qualified teacher-supervisors drawn from the primary school sector. Most of them had difficulties in handling the senior secondary school curriculum because they lacked the necessary academic and professional skills for that level (Laymaman, 2001). Hence the DECs became secondary schools in everything but name but the secondary education offered at the DECs was of much poorer quality than that provided at conventional secondary schools, contrary to MCC's mission statement at its establishment. This was due to, inter alia, under-qualified teachers, lack of education materials, poor infrastructure and very large classes.

In an attempt to improve MCDE programmes, a pilot project was run in 25 DECs assisted by DANIDA (1997–1998). The purpose of the pilot study was to find out how open learning could be implemented by (1) improving the management of the DECs (open schools), (2) improving teaching and learning in the DECs, and (3) improving the instructional materials by using conventional books.

MCDE suggested some of the reasons why DECs were converted to CDSSs as: to improve quality at DECs; the decline in the spirit of

distance education and the failure of the DANIDA/MCDE (Ministry of Education) pilot project (MCDE 1998). Chakwera (2005), however, says that the change was seen as a pro-poor reform in education because DEC's enrolled 80% of school going children with a majority from rural areas. The ever-increasing failure rate in national examinations for DEC's was a justification for a sudden policy change that could not wait for consultations.

The policy change may seem to have been sudden but the United Democratic Front had hinted on this change in its manifesto in 1993 that it would "increase secondary school places by building more secondary schools *or converting MCDE centres to full status secondary schools*" (My emphasis) (United Democratic Front, July 1993, p31, paragraph 8). Although the manifesto did not indicate the number of secondary schools to be built, the numbers declared later by President Bakili Muluzi were 250 new secondary schools and establishing 240 community day secondary schools. President Muluzi announced the construction of the 250 secondary schools throughout the country at a mass rally in Mulanje on Sunday 20th August 1995. The 240 CDSSs were announced in the State of the Nation address to Parliament on 5th March 1996. However, it is not clear whether the 240 CDSSs were to be constructed or converted from existing DEC's or whether the 250 included the 240. The aim was to have at least one secondary school in every constituency (Kamlomo 1995, Muluzi 1996).

The conversion of DEC's to CDSSs had a number of consequences.

- It reduced the responsibilities and activities of MCDE to a minimum. The College was only mandated to register or enroll night school students and sell some study modules to the public. Originally, the College registered students in night secondary schools and DEC's, developed and printed teaching and learning materials and distributed them to the students. The College supervised and coordinated the activities of the centres and was also responsible for organizing the marking of tests and giving feedback to the students. After the conversion of the DEC's, the college was also incapacitated in the sense that most of the machinery used in the production of printed material was moved from the College to the Malawi Institute of Education in Zomba, leaving the staff that had been engaged in such production without much work to do (M'mana 2004). Out of frustration some of the staff moved out of the College and sought greener pastures.
- The change almost left MCDE without students because entry into CDSS was now by selection and not through registration with MCDE. Only those students in night secondary schools became MCDE students. As shown above, there were only 44 night secondary schools at the time DEC's were converted to CDSS and since night secondary schools operated in conventional secondary schools their enrolment was more

regulated than that of DEC's and it was more like that of conventional schools. In most cases there was only one stream making a total of not more than 10,000 students country wide.

- MCDE became dormant until 2001 when the College was given a new mandate to revive open distance education programmes. These were the same programmes that MCDE were offering to their students as correspondence courses, now renamed open distance education programmes offered at night secondary schools, also renamed open schools. With the phasing out of DEC's the only avenue left for school leavers to pursue secondary education through distance learning was to enroll into a night school.
- The conversion of DEC's to CDSSs brought in selection, which limited the number of students who could join a particular CDSS (former DEC). This left many students without access to secondary education in each educational zone. (To help manage the many primary schools in Malawi, the Ministry of Education has created Education divisions which group primary schools into smaller groups for management purposes. There are six Education Divisions which are composed of four to six Education Districts. These districts are further divided into zones. Each zone has six to 10 primary schools. This form of grouping is done for easy management of the schools) (Malawi SDNP 2007).

Selection to secondary schools is done at two levels. After all the examinations have been marked, the results are sent to the Ministry of Education, which sets standards for selection to conventional secondary schools and CDSSs. The Ministry headquarters selects students into the conventional secondary schools and selected CDSSs whose number was 112 at the onset of CDSSs according the CDSS Policy (paragraph 7). The results are then sent to the districts for selection to the rest of the CDSSs. Committees consisting of headmasters from catchment primary schools and the CDSS in question select students to go to this school (SDNP 2007, Ministry of Education 1999). DEC's recruited as many students as they could so that one may say there was no limit per class but government selection brought a limit to a maximum of fifty students per class and not more than one stream per school so that the official figure would be a maximum of two hundred students per school when in a DEC this figure would be for one class. Therefore, most of the students who could easily have joined the DEC's were denied that opportunity. It should, however be noted that the official figures per class at the establishment of DEC's was much smaller (minimum of 20 and maximum of 40 per class) but these figures were quickly forgotten and MCDE did not seem to enforce them (Ministry Circular 5/66, February 1966).

- Parents and school committees were compelled to seek alternative routes to secondary education leading to the establishment of many night secondary schools or open schools. For the same reason the number of private secondary schools increased. Business people took advantage of the great demand for secondary education which the government could not meet and opened schools anywhere possible, for example, dwelling houses, old bars and rest house buildings or any building that could accommodate people. Others put up purpose built structures and some church organizations operating grant-aided schools decided to go private. However, private schools were more expensive than government schools and therefore parents who could afford keeping their children at DEC's could not easily send them to private schools. DEC's were also found everywhere as those without their own premises operated in primary schools. With the phasing out of such DEC's, the option of night secondary schools could not meet the demand as night schools operated in conventional secondary schools which were sparsely located.
- Learning from the above scenario, the Ministry of Education was compelled to re-introduce distance learning and improve night secondary school teaching. More night schools were established in the CDSSs. Government directed that open distance education programmes should be provided by MCDE and preparation of instructional materials should be increased. This

required sensitization of divisions and district managers as well as head teachers and the public since the phasing out of DEC's had seen MCDE dormant for almost five years.

Statement of the Problem

Stakeholders involved in a project may perceive participation differently and usually have different reasons or motives for participation. Basic to all participation are power dynamics in the participatory process. Unless people have real opportunities to have a say in planning and implementation of their development, participation may not be meaningful. The real purpose of participation is to develop human capabilities for development decision-making and action. Participation means a kind of local autonomy in which people discover the possibilities of exercising choice and, thereby, becoming capable of managing their own development (Mathur 1986). The way in which people perceive participation and how they are involved in the project activities will determine whether the real purpose of participation is achieved or not. The dynamics of power among participating groups or stakeholders will determine the outcome of participation which may be positive, that is, empowering; or negative, leading to passive participation or powerlessness; or result in failure of the project.

The Malawi Correspondence College was established in 1965 to cater for the large number of school leavers who could not make it to

secondary school through government selection. Due to the overwhelming enrolment at MCC, the college established MCC centres where students could meet and study under supervision. The literature reviewed showed that the MCCCs (later DEC)s were established with community participation in infrastructure development and the running of the centres while the government provided teachers and some teaching and learning materials through MCC (and later MCDE). Government made it clear to communities that the establishment and running of the MCCCs was the responsibility of the communities.

MCCCs (later renamed DEC)s became very popular with communities as they were seen as the easier way for communities to access secondary education for their children who could not be selected to conventional schools. Community participation was guaranteed as DEC)s were seen to benefit the communities directly.

MCDE catered for about 80% of secondary education in the country up to December 1998 when the Government converted the DEC)s to CDSSs. CDSSs became government controlled in terms of selection and finances although they were expected to be community schools in terms of their everyday running. The questions that this study set out to answer were whether the community was still involved in CDSSs; how communities were involved in DEC)s; and whether community participation in CDSS was different from

participation in DEC's and how. It was, therefore the purpose of this study to examine community participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi by investigating how communities were involved in the establishment and development of what used to be distance education centres (DEC's) under the Malawi College of Distance Education, and were converted to Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS's), now directly under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to assess community participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi by investigating the extent of community involvement in the establishment and management of DEC's; their transition to CDSS's; and in their management as CDSS's.

Specific Objectives

To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were formulated:

- To investigate the Ministry's and the people's understanding of the concept of CDSS;
- To identify the source of initiative to establish DEC's in the areas;

- To characterize the nature of community participation in the establishment of the DEC;
- To determine the level of community participation in the management of the DEC;
- To investigate changes, if any, in community participation brought in by the change in status from DEC to CDSS.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to get information on community participation in the provision of secondary education with the aim of documenting practices that empowered community.

Conceptual framework

This study proceeds with an understanding of participatory development as a partnership between or among actors involved in the process and that this partnership is based on dialogue during which the development agenda is jointly set. The aim of community participation is to achieve empowerment of the participating community where participation goes beyond the implementation of a project and includes defining projects and formulating policies (Miraftab 2003).

In the literature reviewed, it was noted that all the researchers and writers whose work was reviewed acknowledged that there were degrees of community participation that ranged from non-participation to genuine or authentic participation, where authentic participation refers to involvement of local populations in the creation, content and conduct of a program or policy designed to change their lives and this requires recognition and use of local capacities and avoids the imposition of priorities from outside. Genuine participation is characterized by power-sharing, decision-making and control.

An analysis of this partnership in participatory development in education in Malawi will take into consideration power relations that existed between/among the actors regarding community participation in DEC's and CDSS's. Community participation may be conceived as a means (efficiency/effectiveness) or as an end (empowerment/emancipation). As a means, community participation does ameliorate communities' immediate problems but does not build the capacities of the communities to go beyond the projects. Communities are used as large pools of labour but they do not challenge their larger political and economic contexts. This type of participation may be efficient and cost effective but will leave communities without real influence in decision-making or control over their life situations. On the other hand, community participation as an end entails empowerment or emancipation where participation

goes beyond the implementation of a project and includes defining projects and formulating policies (Miraftab 2003). This means that if genuine participation had taken place, communities should have had a say in the change from DEC to CDSS.

The present study makes an assessment of whether genuine participation took place or not by applying a typology of a hierarchy of participation according to Arnstein’s (1969) classification of public participation as follows: manipulation, therapy, information, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control as illustrated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Conceptualizing participation as power

8	Citizen Control	→	Degrees of Citizen Power
7	Delegated Power		
6	Partnership		
5	Placation	→	Degrees of Tokenism
4	Consultation		
3	Informing		
2	Therapy	→	Non-Participation
1	Manipulation		

Adapted from Arnstein (1969)

Arnstein’s main argument is that participation without distribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides were

considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit and maintains the status quo.

According to Arnstein, each rung of the ladder pattern corresponds to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product. Going through the hierarchy of participation, the bottom two rungs represent non-participation whose objective is not to enable people to participate in planning and conducting programmes but to enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants from their problem, in this case lack of access to secondary education. The officials educate, persuade and advise citizens, not the reverse. Those who hold power would like to prove that that the grassroots people were involved in the programme when there was no discussion with the people.

Rungs 3 to 5 represent tokenism. 3 and 4 allow participants to hear and to be heard but have no power to ensure that their voice has an influence. In this category, there may be a lot of information passed on to communities but the communication is usually one-way for example by using the news media, pamphlets, posters and sometimes meetings where superficial information is given and questions are not adequately answered or are discouraged altogether. Intimidated by futility, legalistic jargon and the prestige of the officials, Arnstein says that communities find themselves endorsing the agency's proposal. In consultation, the most frequently used methods

are attitudes surveys, neighbourhood meetings and public hearings. If participation does not go beyond this, people are primarily perceived as statistics and participation is measured by how many people answer questionnaires, attend meetings or take brochures home.

Rung 5 is a higher level of tokenism where rules of the game allow participants to advise but the right to decide is retained by the power holders or development agency, in this case the government. This type of participation, at the best, can be described as window-dressing. In placation, community members begin to have some degree of influence but their influence is not guaranteed and remains at tokenism. A few hand-picked "poor" people are placed on the decision-making body where they are allowed to advise but they are not accountable to the community. At the same time, if these people are outnumbered by the traditional power elite they are outvoted in decision-making. The elite allow the people to advise but the decision whether to use the advice or not remains with the power-holders. The degree to which the community is placated depends on the quality of technical assistance they have in articulating their priorities and the extent to which the community has been organized to press for those priorities.

The last three rungs represent citizen power. True participation begins with partnerships that enable citizens to enter into negotiation, engage in trade-offs with power holders and share decision-making

responsibilities. After the ground rules have been established through some form of give-and-take, they cannot be changed unilaterally. Arnstein says that partnerships work most effectively when participants have an organized and resourced base from which to work, and to which they are accountable. In rungs 7 and 8 participants form the majority in decision-making arenas or have full managerial power. At this level, communities demand the degree of power that guarantees that they can govern a programme or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which outsiders may change them. However, Arnstein highlights some arguments against community control which include the following: it supports separatism; it creates balkanization; it is more costly and less efficient; it is incompatible with merit systems and professionalism; and this may end up allowing the have-nots to gain control without allowing them sufficient funds to succeed.

The assessment of community participation is done by comparing how DEC's operated, how CDSS are operating and analyzing the differences in their operations. From the analysis, an overall assessment of community participation in secondary education in the two systems will be made.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on participation and/or participatory development and the experiences from various projects and programmes undertaken and studied internationally and locally. Participation in this chapter either appears alone or with a qualifier “popular” or “community” to make popular/community participation. The three are used interchangeably.

Popular Participation

Popular participation in the development process first appeared in the developed societies and its emergence coincided with the growth of education, the rise of democratic institutions and the spread of communications and so participation is associated with modernization. Decentralization, which includes participation, has become a means for promoting participatory development. Decentralization is the devolution of central state assets and powers to local or private decision-making bodies such as local government, local administrative branches of central government, community organizations and individuals. In developed countries, more people

become involved in decision-making through citizen action groups and many other ways than is the case in countries that are less developed where government tends to remain the concern of a small elite group. (Mathur, 1986; Malawi Decentralization Secretariat, 1998; Ribot, 2000; Platteau and Abraham, 2002).

Different people define popular participation differently and the concept is understood and interpreted in different ways depending on the political and socio-economic environment prevailing in a country. Because of this diversity in meaning, confusion may arise when the term is used without specifying which of the divergent views is meant. However, all of them agree that there are different forms and degrees of participation, which can be viewed as a spectrum ranging from non-participation to genuine participation. Whether participation becomes cosmetic and exploitative or whether it becomes genuine in which case communities exercise a degree of control over the process and participate in decisions and are empowered, depends on the conditions within which the collaboration is established. Two factors are important in this: the domain in which the participatory process is conceived and the degree of institutional support communities receive for mobilizing resources (Miraftab, 2003).

Ideally, popular participation refers to the ability of people to share, influence, or control design, decision-making, and authority in development projects and programmes that affect their lives and

resources. In any project or programme in an area, this means the involvement of the people in the area in defining their problems and the feasible solutions to the problems, and then selecting the chosen remedies, designing the work, allocating responsibilities and sharing in the benefits (Vasoo, 1991; Peters, 2000).

Miraftab (2003) argues that viewing community participation as a means or as an end has different effects on the participating community. Participation as a means advocates mobilizing communities as a means to effective and efficient project implementation. This has been observed to help communities to improve their conditions but this ends with the end of the project, while participation as an end stresses the empowerment derived from community participation which goes beyond the implementation of the project and includes, defining project goals and objectives and formulating policies. The latter view calls for the role of the community to change from that of a passive recipient to an active initiator of projects. In practice, both views have been observed to fall short of the ideal.

In most cases however, participation has been observed to be rhetoric for government and other development agencies. Much of the time the situation is not clear so that in a participatory situation, there may be partial participation with different degrees of participation, but for any meaningful participation, not any kind of

participation will do. Forced or directed participation is not acceptable, but it is the democratic participation that is being sought (Vasoo, 1991; Peters, 2000).

Participatory situations have failed to achieve their goals and have remained rhetoric because of the ways in which partnership processes are conceived and institutionalized. Miraftab (2003) attributes this to how the origin of participatory processes is conceived and how community participation is institutionalized and assisted to scale up. This determines whether community participation moves beyond mere tokenism to achieve meaningful participation.

The participation of people in influencing decisions that affect their lives is considered a significant factor in reversing the trend towards unequal distribution of economic growth in favour of the elite and increased marginalization and pauperization of the masses of the rural poor. The aim behind citizen participation is the promotion of collective efforts of citizens to better their communities and the provision of opportunities for them to be involved in various aspects of governmental decision-making processes. Participation should in the long run encourage people to become more self-reliant in social and economic activities and be more participative in neighbourhood and community betterment (Kelkar, 1981; Vasoo, 1991; Peters, 2000). However, Platteau and Abraham (2002) warn that sometimes, from evidence collected from Latin America and Asia, communities suffer

from the disadvantage of not being as accountable as higher-level agencies to their members. Village elites tend to appropriate for themselves whatever portion of the resources that they need and let the poor have the leftovers.

Hoddinott (2002) observes that in any participatory situation, it is impossible to determine in advance all possible contingencies that will arise, but establishing who has decision-making power has a direct bearing on what is meant by participation. To this effect, Hoddinott makes a distinction between formal and real authority. Formal authority is the right to decide, while real authority is the effective control over decisions. This distinction given by Hoddinott suggests that it is possible to have formal authority and not exercise it in a given situation.

Chinsinga (2003) also notes this contradiction between formal authority and real authority in the organization of the Malawi's Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). The 1994 PAP clearly indicated beneficiary participation as its guiding philosophy and yet in the PAP's implementation matrix, the mandates of some agencies are clearly in conflict with the underlying spirit of participatory local planning so that the desired bottom-up approach is forced to adapt to a top-down reality.

In agreement with Hoddinott, Kelkar (1981) says the concept of popular participation in development can be viewed as active involvement of the common people in planning and implementation of policies pertaining to their development and having access to the decision-making processes for determining developmental goals. The central issue of popular participation has to be with power exercised by some people and by some classes over other classes. Kelkar, therefore, distinguishes between formal and non-formal participation.

Kelkar explains formal popular participation as the institutionalization of people's involvement in the development process with predetermined goals and fixed course of action. This leads, in the long run, to a bureaucratized administrative structure which starts to prescribe needs for the people and the course to be taken to meet those needs. This structure in the end militates against mass participation in development and expands the power of the elite.

On the other hand, he contrasts this with non-formal popular participation which he explains as originating from direct response to the social, economic and political situation of the people it seeks to involve in development. It is usually free from bureaucratic, hierarchic structure and ideology and its strategy corresponds with the basic and felt needs of the people.

Mathur (1986) cites a Philippine study done by Hollnsteiner that identifies six modes of participation. First, only the educated and moneyed people in the community participate without the participation of the "grassroots" or beneficiaries. Secondly, people or beneficiaries are asked to legitimize or ratify projects identified as those formulated by the government. Thirdly, people are consulted about the project but they do not actually participate in the planning and management of the project. Fourth, people are consulted from the very start and they actively participate in the planning and management of projects. Fifth, people or beneficiaries are represented in the highest policy making body of the agency; and finally, the representatives of the people control the highest policy making body of the agency. These six modes show the degree of participation increasing from the first to the sixth, where the sixth may be considered real participation where people have decision-making powers.

Dzimhiri (1993/94) questions the practicality of the participation of the masses in some situations where he says that participation beyond a certain level may be considered over-participation and dangerous too. He argues that in refugee camps such as Tengani and Chifunga, which he studied, refugees participated in both relief and development but that participation beyond a particular degree could be dysfunctional to the effective management of refugee needs, and requirements. Dzimhiri, after reviewing a number of authors,

concludes that participation as a concept has been analyzed in terms of degrees of involvement: full participation, partial participation and pseudo-participation; that levels of participation have been analyzed as local, medium and distant; and that participation can be looked at in two forms, direct and indirect participation. The summary of it is that participation involves decision-making power and authority and can be analyzed in terms of degree, form and level.

Vasoo (1991) understood grassroots mobilization and participation as involving similar processes and that it is a delicate area in which those in control of community programmes, projects and services tread with care. This may be attributed to the fact that grassroots mobilization and citizen participation attract varied and sometimes divergent interests of various groups in the community.

Evans (1977) expresses the need to understand terminology such as participation, self-help, self-reliance and rural mobilization as a prerequisite to effective planning and implementation. He therefore says that participation occurs in three forms: nominal, consultative and responsible participation. Nominal participation is where the structural forms for participation exist but a closer look reveals that no effective communication upwards takes place. This is a situation where local people do not have any influence in the direction and execution of development activities and their views are not sought in decision-making. They are on the receiving side.

Evans further explains that consultative participation is where decision-makers seek advice and suggestions from various parties. The process is completely controlled by the decision-maker so that the selection of sources and the extent of how the resulting inputs will be made use of are in the hands of the decision-maker. Responsible participation is where the opportunity to discuss issues, exert influence on behalf of one or another alternative, to vote, and finally know by what process the final decision was reached, overlap. Participants in such a process are therefore fully aware of the alternatives, and normally feel some commitment to decisions reached by the process.

Evans also notes that the composition of the group is central in determining the type of activity. Composition heavily depends on the level of the body; the closer the body to the grassroots the more likely it is to be composed of those at the lowest level of organization and the more likely there will be an actual interchange of ideas and perspectives. The larger the area covered by the body, the more it will of necessity be composed of representatives of the affected groups, and the more likely that it will provide a format primarily for top-down communication and more formalized types of response by the representatives.

Ribot (2000) observed the problem of representation in West African Sahelian countries, in forestry and natural resource

management, where the countries did not devolve central power or create truly community institutions. The result was that many apparent decentralization efforts re-centralized with one hand what they devolved with the other. Involving communities in decisions and benefits needs the existence of some structure for community decision-making that is locally accountable and representative. Platteau and Abraham (2002) support Ribot by adding that participation without locally accountable representation is simply not community participation.

Grassie (1974) also explained, as Evans did, two terms that have been used for the aspects of involvement in the planning process: consultation and participation. Consultation is a process whereby members and other interested parties are invited to contribute to the determination of the nature of the decisions but those initiating the consultation decide the extent to which their contributions are taken into account. Those consulted, though responsible for the quality of their advice, are not responsible for the final decision. They do not know for sure, or the extent to which, their contributions have coloured the outcome. Consultation is informal, ad hoc and recognized as a concession by both sides involved in it.

By contrast, Macdonald (2000) argues that participation is a process of argument, debate and persuasion about the decision, culminating typically in a vote for or against a particular decision.

Those who participate can be held accountable for the decision, whether they have voted against it or not. Participants know the extent of the influence they have exercised. Participation requires formal procedures as a right rather than privilege. Participation as a right rather than a favour or privilege extended by those in authority entails a change in administrative procedure and legal frameworks. Meaningful and sustained participation needs not only attention to rules themselves but to the processes for rule making.

Chimombo and Kadzamira (2002) noted the problem of definition of community participation. They argued that the whole essence of mobilizing people is to get them towards some degree of participation. After discussing the problems of defining community participation, they concluded that there was some consensus being reached in the literature they had reviewed, for a more complete definition of community participation, which is involvement in the real decision-making at every stage – identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation and evaluation. This definition requires people to have extensive influence on development decisions and therefore to have more than mere involvement in the implementation of development.

Kandawire (1992) considered the concept of self-reliant participation, which he acknowledged varied from country to country depending on ideological inclinations of nationals in these countries.

He examined a number of definitions and concluded that the underlying factors in community participation were the involvement of members of the community and the linkage of the community to other communities that may or may not be at the same level of development.

Arnstein (1969) views citizen participation as the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. She classified public participation broadly into non-participation, token participation and genuine participation. Each type reflects differences in power and influence among the different stakeholders.

When Arnstein's classification is related to the different writers' and researchers' classifications of participation already discussed, it is observed that they all agree that some types of participation are non-participation while others may be termed genuine participation. Arnstein's classification actually combines all the classifications given by the other writers and orders them into a hierarchy. The regrouping of the different types of participation summarizes the types of participation that can be observed in any situation requiring community participation.

The above scenarios show differences in power and influence exerted by the different stakeholders in a project or programme

situation. These differences affect the type of participation and the effects of that participation on the stakeholders. Participation is better understood as a negotiation process in which at least two actors confront each other and communicate hoping to eventually arrive at satisfactory trade offs. Authentic local participatory planning involves negotiation that is structured in such a way that planners and local people engage in the process as equal partners (Chinsinga, 2003). The manner of stakeholder participation may shift over the duration of the project or programme. The change in roles may be a reflection of the dynamics of the project and will need to be negotiated between stakeholders.

From the different meanings of participation discussed so far, it is clear that the different stakeholders involved in the activities of any project may view participation differently. Each of them will have different reasons or motivations for participation; for example, planners may be interested in the untapped human resources that may be achieved through mobilizing the community. On the other hand, people may participate as a means of gaining easier access to public services and gaining control over the delivery mechanisms (Mathur, 1986; Chinsinga, 2003).

Concept of Community

Before looking at community participation, it is important to discuss the concept of community as understood by different social

scientists. Gould and Kolb (1964:114-115), observe that there is no unanimity on what a community is. They note that the term has been variously employed as a synonym for society, social organization, or social system. Many writers, however, agree that a community has a specific territorial locus, often limited in character. Parsons (1951) defined a community as a collectivity of actors sharing a limited territorial area as the base for carrying out the greatest share of their daily activities". To the above conceptualization of community, Nisbert (1953) makes an additional qualification that integration or a "sense of belonging" characterizes a community. Mercer (1956) making a combination of the above definitions, says that "A human community is a functionally related aggregate of people who live in a particular geographic locality, at a particular time, share a common culture, are arranged in a social structure, and exhibit awareness of their uniqueness and separate identity as a group" (quotations from Gould and Kolb, 1964:114 -115).

Biddle and Biddle (1965), find the above definitions restrictive in a modern setting where people no longer live within a fixed and self-contained social system. They say that flexibility demands the use of a city block, a school district, an area bounded by superhighways, the parish of a church or several parishes, or any other geographic area within which the residents feel that they belong and within which they may seek the common good. Their definition of community, therefore,

is: "community is whatever sense of local common good citizens can be helped to achieve" (p 77).

Platteau and Abraham (2002) prefer to use the economic concept of community as essential in giving a theoretical base for participatory development. The conditions of perfect information and repeated encounters and sanction mechanisms are at work so that players are induced to think of long-term consequences of their present actions. A community is therefore defined as a group small enough to allow good circulation of information among its members who interact more or less continuously over infinite or indeterminate periods of time. Repeated interaction helps the community to achieve cooperative outcomes if the expectations of the members converge on a cooperative strategy that is built on trust. Communication is essential in order to promote trust and a feeling of sameness or togetherness that establishes a collective identity.

Chitere (1994) examined the concept of community as expressed by different social scientists and concluded that in the literature he reviewed, organization of social life and some degree of social solidarity are the main defining characteristics of a community. The characteristics of a community include geographic location, the people who are members of the community, their culture and the time people have been in the area. This description of a community in Malawi applies to a single village or a number of villages that are organized

under the same authority such as group village head and recognizing themselves as belonging together. This researcher's assumption is that the concept of community that the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) is using is the concept of village or group of villages.

From the above definitions, it is clear that the definition of community is both subjective and objective and will change depending on who is using the term, for what purpose and from what background. This indicates the need to give an operational definition of the term when community participation is used.

Chitere (1994) states that under the traditional Community Development Programmes, the village was the focal point of development, conceived as a harmonious unit distinguished by the absence of basic class, caste and ethnic differences. Kandawire (1992), in his study in Malawi, adopted the same concept of community because he said in the administrative framework for Malawi, the village was portrayed as the community. He explains that the community development department was to cooperate with organizations involved in the field of community development and at the village level the community development staff was to supervise and coordinate planning and execute a programme of community oriented nature in all development projects.

Importance of Community Participation

Participation of the target group is necessary both as a matter of principle and practice. There is a growing awareness that people matter especially when plans are about their own development. People should occupy a central place in the whole scheme of things to achieve objectives.

There are several reasons why popular participation is important in development. Mathur (1986), Chitere (1994) and Hoddinott (2002) note that development projects have a greater chance of success when the target group is involved. The involvement of people has been known to lead to timely completion of many projects. Once people accept and own a project, they would like to see the results of their work as early as possible.

Mathur (1986) and Olujimi and Egunjobi (1991) observe that participation at the planning stage will provide planners with information that is not easy to come by if the target group is left out. Their knowledge is vital to the outcome of a project. The most successful projects have proved to be those where the project objectives corresponded with the priorities of partner institutions and beneficiaries, and where local institutions and beneficiaries were regularly involved in decision-making at all stages of the project cycle. Ferguson and Derman (2000) illustrate how the top-down approach and lack of consultation in the Mid-Zambezi Rural Development

Project (MZRDP) negatively affected the outcome of the project. The MZRDP's commitment to a blueprint planning approach made real dialogue among residents, technicians, planners, and other development personnel nearly impossible. Ferguson and Derman report that the outcome to date in the Zambezi Valley has been a pattern of serious resistance by valley residents to different aspects of the MZRDP.

According to Schaeffer (1992) and Hoddinott (2002), participation is important in that people accept change more willingly if they are involved in projects or programmes designed to produce change in their lifestyle. Participative decision-making produces a better "fit" between what people want and what the development agencies offer. Ferguson and Derman, cited above, contrast the MZRDP with another project in the same valley, the Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). CAMPFIRE relied on a bottom-up approach, which empowered local knowledge, practices and institutions. The participatory approach adopted by CAMPFIRE led to an open ended process of discussion and change at the local level stimulated by interactions between local people, on the one hand, and scientists and project planners on the other.

Schaeffer (1992) indicates that participation within a society can lower development costs, make development projects more cost effective and ensure greater equity of benefits of development within

and across the communities. Communities may have their own ways of lowering costs that are not available to outsiders. An example cited for Malawi by Hoddinott (2002) is where communities operating funds from MASAF were able to convince participants to accept lower wages than the officially sanctioned, with savings being devoted to the construction of additional physical assets. Mehta (2000) reports of a similar situation in India where his organization, Seva Mandir worked. There was a lot of enthusiasm on the part of villagers for the works because they felt that they were fully involved in the planning and execution and would share in the final benefit of the development programmes. Even though the remuneration for land development works supported by Seva Mandir were lower than government and World Bank rates, people were drawn to these works because they felt they had control over the process. Without community participation, the opposite may occur.

Schaeffer further observes that once a project is ready people would like to see it operate and deliver the intended services. So they are willing to come forward and ensure that this happens. Participation helps in the sustainability of the project because people are more likely to be committed on the activity after aid stops, and more able to do so given that participation itself helps develop skills and confidence. This can lead to development activities that are more immediately useful and successful and, in the longer term, more sustainable. The experience of CAMPFIRE showed that local people

gained a voice not only in determining the shape of the project in which they were involved, but also in setting scientific research priorities that could have far reaching implications for the valley development (Ferguson and Derman, 2000).

Schaeffer (1992) notes that the monitoring job, which requires presence on the spot, can be performed in a more effective manner by involving the local people. It is believed that no one can be more interested in a project than the beneficiaries and so their involvement is the most efficient way to curb waste. Hoddinott (2000) cites a lot of examples from Latin America where this has been successful in education interventions where school children and their parents have provided better information on quality of instruction as opposed to school inspectors where it was observed that a teacher could just put up a good performance on those occasions when the inspector was present.

Hoddinott (2002), Ferguson and Derman (2002) and Chinsinga (2003) all agree that participation may be an important means of ensuring an equitable distribution of benefits because contributions of inputs give individuals a voice in how resources are to be used. The degree to which local people will participate in collective initiatives is affected by the extent to which they are aware of forces working against their socio-economic welfare. Without an in-depth

appreciation of the causes of their suffering, underprivileged people may resist participation.

Mathur (1986) and Schaeffer (1992) indicate that participation is important because people learn how to promote their development by actually participating in the processes of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Participation becomes an educative process. It instills new confidence in the people to be able to mould their present as well as their future self-help efforts. It permits growth of local capacity, which develops out of partnerships between development agencies and the community. To this, Chinsinga (2003) adds that the partnership denotes a sharing of power between national and local decision-making bodies. Schaeffer (1992) agrees with Mathur adds that participation entails empowerment of the local people. They obtain not only access to resources, but also decision-making and bargaining power as well as a base for sustained self-development efforts. Hoddinott (2002) and Miraftab (2003) warn that failure to delegate true decision-making authority may result in beneficiaries being reluctant to act because of concerns that they will be subsequently overruled.

Participation, as discussed above, has many advantages. As shown, participation will reduce the risk of failure but it is not a guarantee to project success. Participation does not always mean consensus in recipients' interests and all the other stakeholders but it

will enable negotiation to take place, which may mean a lot of costs in terms of time.

While participation is desirable, it is not always achievable. There are a number of powerful obstacles to participation. Some of the obstacles are inherent in the community or society, while others are obstacles within the development agencies.

Constraints to Participation

Internal Constraints

Obstacles in this first category are mainly socio-cultural which may also be called internal constraints. Mathur (1986) points out that the poor have often been blamed for their condition because it has been assumed that their ingrained fatalistic attitude and conservatism have the effect of hindering change. It has been confirmed that most of them are indeed reluctant to participate in development projects but their reluctance has been attributed to their past experiences with governmental agencies which hold them back. One restricting factor has been their lack of awareness of the public services that are available to them in their own village. The result has been that the elite have monopolized all the contacts with outside agents and therefore the poor have felt powerless to compete with the more affluent for services and benefits that the contact may bring.

The very advantage of communities over alternative modes of organization, the informational advantage, gives rise to deficiencies arising from the personalized character of human interactions which are characteristic of small groups. Platteau and Abraham (2002) explain that one effect of this is that the private and the public spheres are not neatly separated so that disagreements at the level of community affairs creates negative impacts on the level of interpersonal relations, and the wrangles that occur in the private domain find their way into the public relations where agreement may prove difficult to reach due to people's ill-feelings.

Mehta (2000) shows how sometimes local politics may hinder the participation of the poor. The alliance between local elite, the elected village representatives and government officials may be so powerful and self-serving that they refuse to provide space for the poor to undertake development activities. Where leaders are elected, the most prominent members are selected and then given training and control over resources. This creates the risk of large amounts of resources being channeled into rural communities to be misused by the local elite. By virtue of their dominant positions, they can manipulate participatory methods by subtly representing their interests as community concerns. On the other hand, Platteau and Abraham (2002) observe how the urban elite may also short circuit the poor through NGOs that are created at the initiative of educated unemployed individuals, politicians or state employees who may have

been laid off due to structural adjustment measures, who may be quick to understand that the creation of NGOs has become one of the best means of procuring funds from the international community.

Peters (2000) warns that participation cannot be expected to work if some of the stakeholders have more information than others. At the same time, information will be interpreted differently by different parts of the system and it is these differences in interpretation that the true participatory system is designed to handle in order to produce the greatest degree of overlap amongst them by argument and debate. Participation is a political process involving contestation and conflict among different people with different interests and claims.

Mathur (1986), Ahmed (1978) and Hoddinott (2002), make the same observation that most disadvantaged societies are not homogeneous in nature. Social stratification, divisions along caste and ethnic lines, personal rivalries and social factionalism, the incompatibility of interests, are all factors that make it very difficult to talk of "community" mobilization through participation. In such a context, participation may bring unresolved and irresolvable conflicts out in the open which otherwise would have been kept constrained and hidden through the operation of traditional roles and responsibilities. Different people who benefit from the existing arrangements have a common interest in maintaining the status quo that preserves the system of privileges, contrary to the rest of the

community. Typically, the chiefs or elders do not accept that commoners rise above them by acquiring old or new symbols of wealth and status. Platteau and Abraham (2002) illustrate this with examples from Burkina Faso, and Guinea Bissau.

The poor tend to expect requests or pressures on their part, whether collective or individual, to be ignored or refused by the authorities and these expectations are often justified. Kishindo (1989) gives an example of government frustrating the spirit of self-help among villagers of Mbela Village in Balaka, in Malawi where the Ministry of Health refused to staff and equip a dispensary because the Ministry had not been informed of the project earlier and therefore it had not made the necessary budgetary allocations to run it. This might have been a plausible explanation to the initial request but subsequent requests were not honoured and the response was that the village and its neighbours were already served by the government hospital and the mission clinic and therefore Mbela dispensary was not a priority in the Ministry's development plans. The government hospital was 16 kilometres away while the mission clinic was 12 kilometres away. Seven years later, Kishindo reported, the dispensary building and the Medical Assistant's house were still unused and in a state of disrepair.

Another constraint to community participation is the difficulty in mobilizing previously uninvolved populations in development efforts.

This becomes a problem because of the absence of the necessary structures or local organizations for community participation. It takes some time and effort, and the process can be quite slow to create mechanisms and motivation for community participation and to sustain the momentum and motivation. This may be traced back to a national political and economic system that does not encourage decentralization of government responsibilities. The presence of pre-existing social capital determines the ability of the communities to engage in collective actions. The absence of these may lead to the risk that community participation may result in the capture of benefits by local elites to the detriment of the poor (Ahmed, 2002; Hoddinott, 2002; Chinsinga, 2003; Platteau and Abraham, 2002).

External Bureaucratic Constraints

The bureaucratic machinery may be a constraint in itself. Participatory development is a more recent development approach while most government-administered development agencies were designed with a centralized, service delivery approach where flexibility and responsiveness to needs in the field have no place (Mathur, 1986). Even where the principles of community participation are accepted in terms of overall national policies and goals, the traditions and attitudes prevailing in governmental bureaucratic machinery may often stand in the way of their translation into action. Chiweza (1998) says that this may be reflected in the unwillingness to decentralize the administrative structure, to entrust authority and responsibility to

community people and to make government programmes and personnel accountable to the people they are supposed to serve. Bureaucrats seriously believe that they alone know the answers to all problems faced by the poor and that they alone have the right to this knowledge (Ahmed, 1978; Chinsinga, 2003; Platteau and Abraham, 2002). There seems to be no appreciation on the part of the government officials that "the true contribution of a culture...consists in its difference from others" (Kandawire 1992, quoting Levi-Strauss, 1961:42).

Evans (1977) points out that participatory development entails partnership between administrators and the people. This means that administrators have to pay frequent visits to the villages for consultations. For the bureaucrats, it is much easier to draw up what they think people want and then relate it to government objectives than to consult millions who are supposed to benefit from the plans. Consultation takes considerable time and resources which, the decision-makers may feel, would be better spent elsewhere. This is particularly true where the decision-maker feels he/she has most of the information already. Platteau and Abraham (2002) indicate that confronted with this dilemma, development agencies are satisfied to maintain a diluted approach. They downplay the task and minimize the cost, with the result that the programme remains too much driven by a supply-led approach rather than being responsive to the needs of the rural people as a participatory approach should be.

Miraftab (2003) cites a South African example where it was a requirement for beneficiaries and developers to sign a social compact to enforce the participatory component of projects requiring the active participation of communities. Developers were reported to often receive exemption from this requirement arguing that community participation made the process too cumbersome and lengthy to be feasible. So developers have been able to sidestep social compacts with the rationale of fast-tracking the projects. In other cases the requirement of community participation has been abused when one or two members sign the social compacts as a formality, in the name of the community.

Chiweza (1998) explains another obstacle where the bureaucrats look at the capabilities of the poor with disdain and they do not have trust in lower level officials. So they think that when these officials are delegated more functions and responsibilities, things will go wrong. Decentralization becomes impossible under such circumstances. The result is that more distance is created between levels of authority and therefore communication breaks down thereby denying the higher-level authorities feedback, which is critical for programme implementation. At the same time communities are restricted from implementing those projects that may be a priority to them, but not a priority to government as Kishindo (1994) illustrates. These may be the much needed projects that may make the difference to them. The field staff working at the grassroots gets frustrated and then leaves the

people to their own devices. In such an environment, the different stakeholders fail to participate effectively towards the success of the project (Chinsinga, 2003).

The organizational problem of representation has been observed to be problematic at times. Grassie (1974) notes that representatives become very different from the people they represent due to their experiences in participatory processes. They take responsibility of decisions that may not be acceptable to the electorate and are often placed in positions where they have to defend the decisions, thereby seeming to identify more with the decisions than with the interests of the electorate. In this way the electorate feels that their freedom has been restricted by participation and then participation is seen as a tool for manipulating them into accepting the administrator's view.

Grassie further explains that there may be political reluctance where involving the community is seen to pose a threat to the government or the system. The responsibility of government for allocating scarce resources among competing claims of different services means that all the allocations are politically determined. A participative structure will awaken dormant pressures, which will legitimately be channeled into the system so that the government will not be able to ignore them. The government is likely not willing to set such an arrangement and strengthen such pressures and therefore popular participation is ignored or discouraged. The demands of

participation can threaten the political order of things and many of the ruling elite would be uncomfortable with a critically conscious peasantry. The result may be suspicion and fear among the elite and of repression of the population.

Chinsinga (2003) explains this in terms of development facilitators trying to guard against excessive participation but the reality being that it is a way of subordinating powerful voices among the grassroots in the development process. Platteau and Abraham (2002) add that by virtue of the fact that they can exercise their authority in other sectors of the village's life, which is interlinked with the development projects, the village elite can obstruct change.

Participatory Development in Education

Schaeffer (1992) notes that in many parts of the world, good and sufficient education, needed now more than ever before, is more and more difficult to find. Governments are finding it more difficult to supply it, sustain and improve it. As a result, Schaeffer observes, the traditional top-down processes of educational development are more frequently being called into doubt and therefore, governments and donors, decision-makers and planners, educators and trainers must be willing and able to try other approaches to development and other patterns of planning, financing and managing education. One such approach is participatory development.

Schaeffer explains that, in education, because basic learning needs are complex and diverse, meeting them requires multi-sectoral strategies and action. Many partners must join with education authorities, teachers and other educational personnel in developing basic education if it is to be seen as the responsibility of the entire society. This implies the active involvement of a wide range of partners: families, teachers, communities, private enterprise, government and non-governmental organizations and institutions in planning, managing and evaluating the many forms of basic education. Schaeffer further explains that the education system is regarded as a subsystem highly interactive with all other parts of the whole where pupils, parents and teachers should be given responsibility over their own affairs, to the point of enabling them to administer the educational system on their own with the context of natural or contractual communities.

Evans (1977) notes that the basic issue, in any system, is the distribution of power, or the locus of control. He adds that increased participation in the planning and control of education of necessity means increasing the power of groups whose current level of power is low or non-existent. In such circumstances, it is not surprising when those who currently hold major power positions object to the inclusion of others whose goals may be in conflict with theirs. However, one problem faced in sharing power is that leaders and planners find it difficult to get competent and effective leaders and groups to whom

power may be devolved effectively. It is this problem that makes the process long and painful until individuals and groups gain sufficient experience to reach the level of competence where the process is likely to produce a better set of educational responses to the needs of the people. Platteau and Abraham (2002) regard this problem as one of the greatest challenges in successful participatory development. Institutional support is an essential condition for a successful participatory development programme.

It is not easy to develop and maintain collaboration and genuine partnership in education among the various stakeholders. The technocratic, centralized, uniform authority usually imposed by the state is not easily married with or tolerant of the more culturally-based decentralized, diverse, supposedly traditional authority derived from the people. A compromise between these is for government to establish common goals, general policies and national planning processes, basic content, and uniform standards and coordinate local action, reconcile divergent interests and protect the weak, losers and sometimes minorities. The most important factor would be for the usual controllers of development (governments and donors which support them) to be enablers charged with permitting other actors to assume both the rights and risks of being partners in educational development. This would encourage participation by these actors and also build capacity of otherwise marginal groups through collaboration

in assessing needs, designing and managing programmes, and making decisions (Schaeffer, 1992; Platteau and Abraham, 2002).

Chimombo and Kadzamira (2002) argue that planners and managers in education need to understand the importance of the partnerships in development and see their task not merely as to improve efficiency and effectiveness of their own sectors' delivery system, narrowly defined, but also to assist and collaborate with other sectors (health, community services, agriculture) and other actors in encouraging a more participatory development process. Such a process, unlike the traditional technocratic, top-down approach, can increase the control of people over development processes, lead to more resources from a wide range of actors; increase programme demand, relevance, efficiency and sustainability, and develop new knowledge, skills and attitudes in those participating in the process.

Von Moltke (1975) identifies groups of people who are subjects of participation in education to include students, teachers and administrators and a given schools' communities (made up of students' parents; community institutions; decision-making bodies; local industry and interested groups). The reasons for their participation are said to range from an expectation of regular information to an expectation of ultimate control, with many intermediate steps. How the groups participate can be direct or indirect or by some form of representation, or delegation, active or

passive. Participation can occur at the action or policy level. Students, teachers and their communities participate by virtue of their respective roles and it is impossible to abolish these since without them education is meaningless.

Von Moltke also explains five general areas in which participation arrangements can have a significant impact. These are giving formal recognition, directly or indirectly, to elements of educational processes which have previously occurred informally; making manifest the motivations of the participants in the education process, thus making it possible to make them more effective in their roles; developing new educational roles over a flexible spectrum thereby decreasing overall antagonisms; reducing the importance of teacher/student format of education; and finally, certain forms of participation vitally affecting the economics of the schools. These effects are not alternatives but should be viewed as interlocking and part of a comprehensive process called participation.

It is observed that fully participative planning will be achieved as a result of a long training and growth process. Planners will need to assess more realistically the costs and benefits of participation, and work with policy-makers to select those areas of decision-making most appropriate for different levels of participation. The educational potential of planning is realizable through participation processes on which education is now depending so greatly. Both consultation and

participation have long been recognized as means of obtaining consensus about action to be taken. However, Grassie (1974), points out that in such a difficult field as education complete agreement is probably too much to hope for, but consultation and participation go some way, at least, to ensuring acceptance of the final decision, and to an understanding of the reasons underlying the decision. However, Platteau and Abraham (2002) express the importance of central government keeping an iron hand on certain crucial components of decentralization while setting directions and structures on how the programmes should operate locally.

While Grassie (1974) realizes the benefits of participation in educational development, like other writers cited earlier, he points out the problems faced in implementing participatory development in education. Firstly, he says that it is time consuming. Most administrators would argue that in their experience, consulting others had yielded little additional information. This would be the experience of head teachers as school administrators as well as of officials as system administrators. Their greater knowledge on how school and system function, and the greater quantity of information that flow to them, enable them to anticipate the kind of difficulty that the others in the system are likely to raise, to provide explanations to them and to support their own points of view more cogently. In addition, those consulted seem less well prepared for the discussions than those consulting them – a result of lack of time the former have had to

prepare their advice, of the inadequacy of their data base compared to that of those consulting them, and their limited view of the organization.

Despite the problems noted above, Grassie also outlines some strengths of participation in educational development. Firstly, participation will strengthen morale and build up commitment to goals and plans of the organization. Secondly, participation will improve personal relationships between people at different levels of the organization, such as involving teachers in decisions about the curriculum and students in decisions about extra-curricular activities. Thirdly, experience of unsuccessful consultation has led those who have felt that the value of their advice has been discounted, to press for participation as a right. Finally, the process of involvement, once started, seems to develop a momentum of its own and move inevitably by stages to full participation. It is an educational experience to all involved in it and if the result is not voluntary sharing of power by those who have always had it with those who have not, then it is brought by militant action on the part of the latter.

Community Schools

Sexton (1967) states that in America, the "community school" had been more often a reality in urban and rural areas than in city slums. In most communities, especially in the urban slum, the school is the dominant institution, the major representative of the outside world,

the largest employer and the prime "opportunity" resource. Yet school and community are usually aliens. Teachers and administrators live elsewhere and often have as little contact as possible with the neighbourhood. Schools blame family and community for student failures but insist that what is outside school walls is not their problem. Sexton believes that interaction might break down communication barriers, provide a voice to the community, and aid students' performance, and reduce reference group confusion among children who now live in two separate worlds.

Warren (1963 cited in Sexton 1967) says that a promising direction in community studies is the attempt to apply the social system analysis to communities and to study structured interaction between two or more units, aimed at goal attainment, the integration of member units, and the tension or conflict between them. The most relevant community for the school is the old geographic community, the neighbourhood. People in a neighbourhood meet each other and share things in common through their children. The "community school" aims to stimulate sharing and interaction. Warren therefore defines the community school in terms of high level of citizen involvement in decision-making at every level. The community referred to comprises the school personnel, students, parents, and citizens in the solution of pressing community problems. Community organizers are made up of both teachers and people from the larger community and the community uses these to stimulate various forms of

community organization so that participation is not limited to school activities but other activities of the community with various other agencies at both local and national levels.

A survey in Malawi done by Chombo and Zoani (1995) in Kasungu and the Northern Region, aimed at establishing educational and administrative personnel and local leaders' views on the concept of community school, revealed that District Commissioners, District Education Officers and local leaders, generally defined community schools as those initiated by parents or community without assistance from government. NGOs such as Christian organizations may be involved in such schools. The running of the schools was expected to be a joint venture between community and government where the community would provide classrooms, teachers' houses, maintenance of buildings and discipline and encourage pupils to go to school. The government would provide teachers' salaries, teaching and learning materials, training of teachers and the management of schools.

The results show that people understood community schools in terms of high community participation from planning, implementation and running of the project. They viewed the whole venture as a partnership between the community and the government with varying degrees of involvement of the stakeholders at different levels.

In a similar survey done by Kunkwenzu and Chonzi (1995) at the same time in the Southern Region of Malawi, involving the same categories of participants as Chombo and Zoani's (1995), the researchers concluded that interviewees did not have a clear concept of a community school. The responses they got indicated that some people took all schools in the district to be community schools. Others thought that these were any schools built by and for the community with funds from the government and donors. Some people explained that these were schools run as the community wished while others said these were schools constructed within the village but near a road.

On the question concerning the role of government and community in running the schools, the answers also varied. Some people felt that the government should have total control while others said the community should have full control, and yet others felt that the running of these schools should involve both government and community.

The researchers attributed these varied responses to the fact that the concept was new to the communities and that the few leaders who had community schools in their areas had a negative experience as the schools were fraught with many problems. Due to these problems, it seems as if very few people wanted to be associated with the schools and so the concept did not really gain ground among the people. The explanation given by the researchers is plausible since people do not

want to be associated with failure or problems. An alternative explanation could be that community participation in the project had not been achieved since the varied responses showed that there was no consensus and there was lack of ownership of the schools on the part of the community. Some people knew what was going on in the schools but others did not, hence the varied responses.

The studies done by Chombo and Zoani (1995) on the one hand, and Kunkwenzu and Chonzi (1995) on the other, were all done with reference to primary schools. When DEC's were taken over by the Ministry of Education, they were renamed Community Day Secondary Schools. It is therefore necessary to find out the conceptualization of a Community Day Secondary School in Malawi.

The main document guiding education provision in Malawi is the "Policy and Investment Framework" (PIF 2000) whose implementation started in January 2000. The document says that the government shall promote a unified structure for government secondary education based on the concept of community day secondary schools from 2001 (PIF: 2000). However, the document does not elaborate on the concept of Community Day Secondary School. The document further states that selection to secondary education will be based on the concept of local catchment area, in pursuance of the goal of creating a national system of day secondary schools.

Since the concept of CDSS is recent in Malawi, not much research has been done in the area. MacJessie-Mbewe (2004) sought to establish the people's understanding of the concept in a study done in Zomba and Thyolo. A CDSS was understood to be a secondary school that was intended to serve the community around it by enrolling students from the community with students commuting from home to school and that it was run by the community. However, the people involved in this study felt that the CDSSs in their areas did not totally meet this definition since the schools did not adequately serve their communities by admitting very few students from the communities and admitting students whom they thought did not belong to their communities. The parents felt excluded from running the schools and the teachers and other education officials felt that they were simply being used to implement decisions from headquarters and had no control of the schools. They all felt that outsiders were running the schools with rules set outside the community.

This shows that the Ministry of Education was viewed as an outsider indicating that there was no partnership between government and the communities concerned in the operations of the schools. At the same time students who were selected from outside the communities' boundaries were regarded as outsiders who usurped their children's positions. As Kandawire (1992) indicated the administrative village was regarded as community and a group of

villages came under the authority of a group village head and groups of villages were under the jurisdiction of a Traditional Authority (TA). Depending on the location of the school and the villages that were involved in its establishment, villagers identified who belonged and who did not.

Chakwera (2005) raised the same sentiments in his study of four CDSSs in 2002. The schools were termed "Community" Day Secondary schools to underscore community ownership, but in practice, the people's perception was that the people's ownership had been lost as neither school committees nor teachers were involved in admission of students as was the case in DEC. Chakwera also observed that most CDSSs he studied operated below capacity due to high dropout rates and this did not make any good sense to communities that CDSSs were empty when many children who had passed primary school leaving certificate examinations but were not selected to secondary school continued to be denied places.

From this literature review, one can conclude that the idea or concept of Community Day Secondary School mentioned in the document involves the idea of catchment area but the concept of community day secondary school is not clearly stated or explained. This idea of a catchment area concurs with the definition of community school as expressed by Warren (1963) where the school was defined in relation to a geographic community, the neighbourhood

where people share things in common and where this neighbourhood is made up of small organizational units which work together for the common good. Studies done in both primary schools and secondary schools on the concept of community school in Malawi indicate that community participation in the activities of the school in decision-making at every level is definitive. This also agrees with what both Sexton (1967) and Warren (1963 cited in Sexton 1967) say that teachers, administrators, parents and the neighbourhood are part of each other. However, the understanding of community school differs slightly from that of Warren who associates the community school more with urban and rural areas than slums. In Malawi this is more of a rural than an urban phenomenon. The reasons for this are historical.

Since independence, government policy on education has always placed emphasis on community involvement in the development of education in Malawi, and prior to 1994, the responsibility for the development and maintenance of primary schools was left almost entirely in the hands of local communities. Communities, particularly those in rural areas have made significant contributions to the development of primary education. Most of the rural primary schools and teachers' houses were constructed on self-help basis and in most cases school committees and Parents' Teachers' Associations (PTAs) had been on the forefront in mobilizing community resources towards the construction and maintenance of schools (Chimombo and

Kadzamira, 2002). This can be traced back to the time when an elected government took over from the colonial government according to The Nyasaland Government Development Plan for 1962 to 1965 which stated that priority in primary education would be given to urban areas where the principle of self-help was not as easily applicable as in rural areas.

From the work done on community day secondary schools, it is clear that the government expected more community participation in CDSSs but due to lack of a common understanding in the operation of the schools, the community did not feel the same as they regarded the schools as no longer in their hands. They felt alienated from the schools with the introduction of government selection and other regulations governing the schools.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is a descriptive study aimed at exploring community participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi. The focus of the study was on those communities around some selected community day secondary schools. The study largely employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis.

Area of Study

The study was done in the South Eastern Education Division of Malawi, in Zomba, Machinga, Balaka and Mangochi Districts. This division was chosen because it is the one within which the researcher's place of work lies. It was easier to combine the researcher's teaching and other responsibilities with this research because shorter distances were involved. The other reason was to cut down on research costs of travel and accommodation. It was also expected that, with careful selection of schools, different modes of community participation would be exhibited, which could inform on other settings in the other education divisions. Schools were purposively selected on the grounds that they had their own premises,

which were constructed as DEC's and they were converted to CDSS's to which students were being selected by the Ministry of Education to start form 1; and that they were easily accessible to the researcher using a small car. Roads leading to some of the schools proved to be impassable, even though the research was conducted during the dry season, due to the fact that gullies had developed across the roads in the previous rainy season and the roads had not been repaired.

Selection of Schools

A list of community day secondary schools was obtained from the education division mentioned. A total of six schools were purposively selected taking into consideration their location, three in the urban or semi – urban areas and three in the rural areas. For the rural schools, one determining factor was their accessibility by car. The researcher went out on a familiarization trip, which was also used to make arrangements with the schools identified. During this tour the researcher made decisions on which schools to include after failing to get to some due to bad road conditions. The urban/rural factor was included to take care of any factors that might affect the different modes of community participation due to location and the effects of the change in status of the institutions on the communities in the different settings. Nsondole in Zomba, Likwenu in Machinga and Nansenga in Mangochi were selected to represent the rural factor while Liwonde in Machinga, Ulongwe in Balaka and Mponda's in Mangochi represented the urban or semi-urban.

Participants

Participants for this study were men and women who were members of the communities around the schools under study. An effort was made to find people in their various capacities, who had been involved in the institutions as DECs and were then serving them as CDSSs; or who had information on the institutions in their association with them as DECs and CDSSs. These included administrators and teachers in the schools; members of school committees, both former and present; and graduates of the schools; village heads and/or chiefs; pupils in the schools; District Education Managers or their representatives; the Division Manager or his/her representative; officials at the Ministry Headquarters and officials at the Malawi College of Distance Education.

Selection of Participants

Participants were selected purposively depending on their positions in the community or their involvement or association with the institutions. Key informants were selected from the various levels of the education offices as follows: the Director of Planning at Education Headquarters or his designate; the Planning Officer at the division, school heads and teachers. Preference was given to teachers who had been at the school when it was a DEC and were still at the school as a CDSS. At the community level, school committee chairs or other members of the committee were selected, parents who had children at the DEC and had children at the CDSS, parents who

currently had children in the school as a CDSS, former students of the schools and village heads and/or chiefs. Other participants were members of focus groups (FGDs) who were men and women from three surrounding villages. Gender considerations were made where possible in the selection of participants in order to have balanced views.

Single sex focus group discussions were held with men and women from the surrounding villages, two groups from each village and two students' groups from each school. The villagers were selected in such a way that they represented different categories of people, regardless of whether they had children at the school or not. In one case a mixed group discussion was held. This happened because too few people turned up from a village to make a viable single sex group. It had been intended that groups of not less than eight people would be used. For most villages, the groups ranged from six to nine, while for students two students of each sex were selected from each class, making eight per group. These students were either class leaders or leaders in other areas who were well conversant with what happened in the school. In two schools, four students were not included since they were not having formal lessons. They had been released to prepare for their examinations and therefore it was difficult to organize them for the focus groups, as they did not report to school.

A total of 342 participants were interviewed as key informants or in focus groups as presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: Number of Participants in Categories

Category	Male	Female	Total
Key Informants			
District Office	5	0	5
Division Office	1	0	1
Headquarters	2	1	3
MCDE	3	1	4
Parents	6	8	14
School Heads	7 (1 former)	0	7
Teachers	6	5	11
Present School Committee Chair	5	0	5
Former School Committee Chair	5	0	5
Village Heads/TAs	7	2	9
Former Students	10	7	17
Focus Groups			
Community Members	14	13	27 (+ 1 mixed) = 28
Students	6	6	12

Data Collection Instruments

An interview guide was developed for Ministry officials at the Headquarters, Division and District levels on the concept of

community day secondary school and on the status of the CDSS before and after the conversion in relation to community participation. A second interview guide was made for officials at MCDE headquarters. The guide sought to establish MCDE's role in the establishment of DEC's, their management and their change to CDSSs. Another interview guide was prepared for focus group discussions with the communities. The same interview guide was used with Key Informants in the communities. Focus groups were included to find out if experiences in participation of the ordinary villager and those villagers in positions of authority differed. The interview guide sought to trace the history of the institutions and the communities' feelings over the change of status from DEC's to CDSS and to find out the impact of the change of status of the institutions on the communities.

A separate interview guide was made for students. The guide tried to find out if the students could tell the history of their schools, the role of the community in its establishment, the role their parents were taking in the running of the schools, their own role in the running of the school, how they felt when they were selected to the school and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of CDSS over DEC's and vice versa.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was done at Songani Community Day Secondary School, which is in Zomba Rural. School level and Key informant interviews were conducted but it was impossible to organize focus group discussions because the people who had been identified for this simply did not turn up. The explanation given was that the people were busy on market days twice a week, and on Friday they went for prayers and on the other days they were busy in their gardens. Different times were explored but none was found suitable. After failing three times, it was decided that the focus groups be abandoned and that information from the key informants could be used to make any decisions and adjustments since the same guide was being used. This experience helped the researcher on how to strategize in making future arrangements for FGDs. Some of the factors that made people reluctant to come to the school or to meet the researcher anywhere else had to do with the relationship between the school and the community which the researcher gathered was not very cordial.

The choice of this school was based on the fact that it was easily accessible to the researcher and it was one institution, which was well established, with its own premises before its conversion to community day secondary school. After the data from the pilot study had been analyzed, some adjustments were made on the interview guides on the sequence and number of questions. It was noted that some questions

were repetitive and so they were excluded with the result that the questions became fewer.

Data Collection

It was expected that a minimum of six focus group discussions would be conducted with communities around each school, one for men and one for women from each of the three villages that were selected around each school. The decision to use single sex groups was made to avoid the cultural barriers of male domination in discussions and also to find out the type of participation the different categories of people were involved in and how they felt about the change, without any interference from the other category. Two focus group discussions were held with students for each of the schools, one for each sex.

Key Informant Interviews were held with the Director of Planning at Education Headquarters, the Principal Education Officer in the Secondary School Section at headquarters, the Planning Officer at headquarters, the Planning Officer at South Eastern Education Division, District Education Managers or their designates in the concerned districts, heads of the selected schools, teachers, village heads, parents and graduates of the schools. It was not possible to meet the Division Manager of the South East Education Division because she was out of her office for a long time on other official engagements and soon after that she went on study leave.

In all the places that the researcher visited, observation of what was happening in the schools in relation to the subject under discussion was made in order to compare with what was said. An observation of the physical structures, class sizes, the facilities in the school and the turn-up of the parents for interviews was made, basing on the experience of the pilot study.

A team of two researchers was involved: the Principal researcher (female) and a male assistant. The assistant researcher helped to take notes and to operate the tape recorder that was being used. The tape recorder was used with the consent of the participants, so that all the words said by the subjects were preserved, in addition to detailed notes during the FGDs and key informant interviews. However, a few participants did not want their voices to be taped. In that case, an effort to write detailed notes was made and a reconstruction of the interviews was made soon after the interview while the memory was still fresh. Where possible, the exact words used by the speakers were used.

Participants were asked to choose between using English or Chichewa or a mixture of the two as they wished. Notes were taken in English. Transcriptions of the Chichewa were translated to English for easy inclusion as quotations in the report.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed manually according to emerging themes on each objective. This was done by taking each category of participants and examining each response to each question. All the responses that expressed the same ideas were put together and themes were derived from these responses. The themes from the various categories were then compared with those from other categories to determine similarities and differences. This was possible because some questions, though expressed differently to suit the categories, sought the same information. It was from these comparisons that the story of this study is being told.

Limitation

This study was done in one division in the Southern Region of Malawi, which means that the Central and Northern Regions were not covered. There might be cultural, demographic and geographical differences affecting participation that might not be catered for by the present study. For example, the distribution of DECAs might not have been the same in the three geographical regions of the country so that the challenges to communities brought in by the conversion of DECAs might not be exactly the same. However, it was hoped that the issues raised by this study would give insights to what was happening in other areas of the country since the policies made by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology affected all the education divisions in the country.

Another limitation of the study was the sensitivity of the research topic given the fact that the study was conducted barely ten years after the one-party dictatorship of the Malawi Congress Party where people were denied freedom of expression especially where views contrary to those of government were held. Some respondents still lived in fear and therefore could not open up or provide frank answers to the questions asked. However, since different categories of people were involved in the study, the researcher was able to get adequate information from some categories and a comparison of the responses with those who were guarded, informed the study appropriately.

Ethical considerations

Before the study commenced, permission was sought from the Ministry Headquarters to carry out the study in their institutions. A copy of the letter was sent to the Division. Both the Ministry Headquarters and the Division granted permission for the study to be done. Copies of the letters were made and taken the schools and the district offices for them to cooperate with the researchers on the preliminary visits as appointments to visit the institutions were being sought.

At the schools, the head was approached first in order to make arrangements for the interviews with the different groups in the schools. The heads were asked to assist in organizing the various categories of participants at the school level and the community. In

the communities, chiefs or village heads were approached and the intentions of the study made known to them. They were informed of the Ministry's consent and that all the levels of the Ministry's Education Management were aware of the study.

Before any interview commenced, the interviewees were informed of the study and their role in it using the format given in appendix 2 which had a Chichewa version. Their verbal consent was sought before the interview. Within the introduction respondents were asked to be free to say what they felt as the information they gave would be kept confidential and that no names would be mentioned. The role of the research assistant was explained as he took notes during the discussions and interviews. Consent was sought from the key informant interviewees and the focus group participants on the use of the tape recorder.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The previous chapter described the methodology followed in carrying out this study. This chapter presents the results of the study according to the objectives that were set out at the beginning and the themes that emerged from the data yielded by the study. In presenting the results, an effort has been made to preserve the anonymity of the schools and the participants in order to maintain confidentiality where mentioning the schools and positions of the participants would easily identify the individuals. However, in some instances, it is not possible to maintain anonymity without jeopardizing the flow and credibility of the report. In such cases, only those details that are essential for the clarity of the report have been given without, it is hoped, exposing the individuals behind the details.

Conceptualization of a Community Day Secondary School

Ministry of Education Officials

To establish the Ministry officials' conceptualization of a CDSS, a question was asked to all the officials interviewed at Headquarters, Division and District levels to explain what the Ministry of Education,

Science and Technology's understanding of CDSS was. The basic explanation of the concept was the same for all levels of the education system although there were some slight differences in detail. From the district offices visited, the concept of CDSS was expressed in terms of location of the school, beneficiaries of the school and community participation. The summary of it was that a CDSS was a school located within a community, catering for pupils from a radius of about ten kilometres around the school and that the community was required to be actively involved in the affairs of the school and everyday running of the school. The following explanation from one of the responses from the District Education Managers sums it all:

It is a secondary school where pupils are selected from a catchment area of a ten-kilometre radius where community participation is required in school management and development (District Education Manager 1).

The South East Education Division's explanation was similar to the ones given by district officials. The Planning Officer described a CDSS in the following terms:

It is a secondary school managed by the surrounding community, and its students come from the community around. The community is responsible for financial support, maintenance of structures and the everyday running of the school (Planning Officer, South East Division).

Officials at the Ministry Headquarters embraced both explanations given by the education district officials and the South

East Education Division but they emphasized on the “de- boarding policy” as follows:

It is a day school being managed by the community, the community having an upper hand in the running and development of the school, maintaining and fundraising for the school. These are schools not adequately assisted by government.

DECs had boarding facilities, so the word “day” is important. The community was to have an upper hand in the affairs of schools but there were to be no boarding facilities (Planning Officer, Headquarters)

It is clear from the above explanations that the various levels of the Ministry shared the same understanding of the concept but with emphasis on different areas of the concept. This is a reflection of points (5) and (6) of the new policy as expressed in the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Circular Ref. No. DP2/31/11/2 dated 12 January 1999 to all Division Managers, District Education Officers, and Heads of all Secondary Schools, Executive Director MANEB and the Principal MCDE. Point (5) explains that CDSSs will be day schools and that any existing boarding facilities should be phased out, while point (6) explains that pupils to the CDSSs will be drawn from schools within the local catchment area of the CDSS not exceeding 10 kilometres.

The differences in detail may be a reflection of the differences in the responsibilities of the various offices in their implementation of the CDSS policy. The Ministry is the source of the policy and therefore the officers at headquarters are more likely to be articulate than the other

levels on the details of the policy. The Division and District officers emphasized the catchment areas as these affected their offices more in terms of selection of students to the schools and coverage in terms of teaching and learning material provisions and advisory services.

Schools and Communities

At school and community levels, a question was posed to individual participants and focus groups to explain their understanding of a CDSS. Their responses showed that their conception of CDSS focused on the “catchment area” or feeder schools, that is, the area for which the school caters or draws its students from. The most popular description given in Chichewa was, “*Sekondale yoyendera yadera lomwero*” (A secondary school within a particular area where learners commute from home). Typical responses from heads of schools or their deputies defined a CDSS as “a communal secondary school where students commute from home and admission of students is by government selection from feeder schools”.

Teachers also understood the concept in the same way as school heads did. A CDSS was defined as “a school where pupils come from the community around the area” (Female Teacher Centre 3).

Almost absent in most of the descriptions by school heads and their teachers was the idea of community participation in the running

of the schools. Very few among them explained the concept of CDSS in terms of community involvement. The responses given by heads of schools and their teachers, therefore, emphasized more on the idea of students commuting from home to school and the area that the school was designed to cater for. Community involvement and participation did not readily come as part of the definition of a CDSS but came out after probing.

The reason for the failure to explain the concept of CDSS in terms of community participation may be explained as a reflection of what was happening on the ground. The heads of schools and their teachers did not see the community in the activities of their schools neither did they expect community involvement in these schools as community participation in education was more of a phenomenon of primary schools and DEC's. The experience of a government run secondary school in Malawi was that the government provided for the schools and made decisions about the schools and the school personnel were accountable to the government and not the community in their everyday activities. This is what happened in what Lewin (1997) described as conventional secondary schools. School personnel expected that what was happening in conventional secondary schools would be extended to CDSS as government had taken over ownership of the schools.

Students explained the concept as their teachers and school heads did but they added an element of comparison between the CDSS and the district boarding and national schools. The CDSS was seen as a school of lower quality than the conventional schools and that it was for the less privileged people both intellectually and economically.

In one school, a CDSS was explained as “a government school where students commute.....those who cannot afford boarding fees” (Boys’ FGD Center 1), while in another “it is a school from a DEC to assist those around it.where pupils operate from home. It is like a branch of a national school like Balaka” (Boys’ FGD Centre 6). It was also understood in another school as “a school composed of day scholars and there is no boarding. It is not a national secondary school and there are no pupils coming from distant places. All pupils at the school come from within the district or area” (Girls’ FGD Centre 3).

Students were comparing their schools with boarding schools because of their experience of secondary education in Malawi where secondary schools were ranked in some pecking order. The most prestigious schools were national schools (both government and grant-aided) where students from all over the country were selected to and these claimed the cream of the nation based on primary school leaving certificate examination results and were better provided for in terms of

teaching and learning materials and other facilities. The next best were district schools (like Balaka cited above), which catered for pupils from all over the district where the school was situated. In both categories there were some boarding facilities although the running of these facilities was different as explained by Lewin (2001) cited in the literature review. The CDSS ranked third and lowest. Selection of students to these schools was given the least priority as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's planning division confirmed that national schools got the cream and CDSS got the least able pupils, in an interview with the Director of Planning. The Director of Planning at the time of data collection described the selection system as a bad policy, which needed to change.

The CDSS policy also implies this pecking order in paragraph (7) where the Ministry isolated 112 CDSSs where the Ministry would select pupils to and the rest were left to District Education Offices and the local leaders. According to the Director of Planning referred to above, the Ministry was reviewing the selection policy and considering revisiting the CDSS policy and upgrading the CDSSs so that they should be brought to the same level as the conventional schools.

At community level, the concept of CDSS was explained differently depending on how informed the participants were. Most School Committee members explained the concept as the school heads, teachers and pupils did but there were others, but not many,

who showed that they did not have any information at all. From the school committee members, those who seemed to be more informed gave responses like:

It is a school for the people around the school, built by the people, for the people and the school is the responsibility of the people (Current School Committee Chair Centre 4).

It is a school for the community – for everybody. It's our school. Provisions for the school are our responsibility (Current School Committee Chair Centre 5).

Former students of the different schools as DEC's or CDSSs gave more or less the same answers as those given by current students and the responses given by teachers and school heads on their conceptualization of CDSS.

Parents of current and former students who were interviewed also gave their understanding of the concept of CDSS. Some gave the same explanations as those given by school level participants but were fewer than those who gave descriptions which did not convey much meaning and yet others did not attempt to answer at all but just kept quiet or admitted ignorance. The following are some of the answers given by some of the less informed parents in response to the question that they should explain their understanding of a CDSS. These responses were repeated even after rephrasing the questions for clarity.

“Ndi sekondare” (It is a secondary school) (Female Parent of current student Centre 4).

“Sukulu idziyenda bwino”. (The school should run well) (Female Parent of current student Centre 6).

Men’s focus group discussions reflected all the descriptions that were given by the respondents selected from the various Ministry levels, the schools and the other participants. Some described CDSS as a school with no boarding facilities, while others understood it as a government school that evolved from primary school to a DEC. They described it as a school for the villagers themselves. One group described it as an independent or autonomous school (*yoyima payokha*), while others saw it as a school for villagers where the villagers were responsible for the school through the school committee. It was also seen as a school for those who had failed to go to conventional government secondary schools or those not fit for conventional government secondary schools and those who were less privileged. This was a sentiment they shared with students as explained above.

The women’s focus groups reflected the same ideas but seemed to emphasize more on the lack of boarding facilities. The women were more concerned with the security of the students as this appealed to their motherly instincts more than it appealed to men. The concern was more on the girl child since she was observed to be more

vulnerable as the discussions that come later in this chapter will show.

It was interesting to note the differences between the men's groups and the women's groups. The men seemed to be more informed than the women and this can be explained in terms of gender roles where men perform the community management roles in society while women perform more of the reproductive roles, hence their emphasis on the welfare of the pupils.

Most village heads did not have a clear concept of what a CDSS was. This may be attributed to the fact that the concept of CDSS was new and it seemed to have been imposed on them without prior preparation. The other reason may be that most of them were illiterate and therefore they could not have read about it from newspapers. Most of them got information from public rallies and meetings. One village head simply answered: "It is an English term. I cannot understand it" (Village Head Centre Centre 2).

A few chiefs and village heads seemed to have some concept but their conception was not complete. The chiefs' and village heads' backgrounds and exposure to different gatherings may explain this. Two quotations from these leaders will illustrate this. The two leaders who gave these responses could speak some English as they explained themselves:

It is a school for the people in the village with people taking responsibility of everything that is done at the school with assistance from government (Chief Centre 5).

It is a school with no boarding facilities (GVH Centre 5).

The analysis above has shown that the Ministry of Education Headquarters had a full concept of what a CDSS was and should be. However, this concept is not as clearly reflected at the other levels of education. Each level seemed to reflect only part of the concept that, perhaps, applied more to the functions of their offices at those levels. As we moved further to the community, the concept realization became weaker and weaker until it was not known at all.

The discrepancy in understanding the concept of CDSS may be explained using the conceptual framework adopted by this study, the hierarchy of participation developed by Arnstein (1969). The differences shown by the different categories were a result of how the groups were involved in the introduction of the concept. There was almost no participation and according to the hierarchy, this represents the lowest rang of tokenism where people were just informed and this was done from a political platform outside the education system and from the highest authority in the land, the State President. The channel used was a political rally which was covered live on the national broadcasting station, giving nobody any chance to discuss the issue or to ask questions or even to explain what was

going on. No one could dispute or challenge what the State President had said and so from there the various authorities in the education hierarchy had to confirm the State President's declaration.

After the announcement of the change of status of DEC to CDSS, things had to work in reverse. According to information gained from the interviews conducted, the Ministry of Education's circular to communicate this innovation was issued after the political declaration that all DECs would be CDSSs. Members of Parliament also took it from the announcement and went into their constituencies confirming the announcement. Heads of schools also made announcements at assemblies following the Ministry circular. However, none of the schools managed to produce the said circular letter for the researchers to see, which raises the question whether the letter had reached the schools or not. The researcher obtained a copy of the letter from the division office and the letter was dated 12th January 1999 (Appendix 4).

In terms of community participation, this was clearly a case of information to the communities which, according to Arnstein's classification, is token participation in the decision made since at this level emphasis is put on one-way flow of information, from officials to citizens, with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation and therefore no dialogue. All they were required to do was to accept and implement the decision. Since most of the

communication to the communities was verbal, there was a lot of room for distortion of information as the message moved from level to level. At the same time, no opportunity was allowed for any level to go through the innovation and understand it fully.

How and Why the Distance Education Centres Were Established

The second objective that this study set out to answer was to identify the sources of initiative to establish the DEC's in the areas under study. Ministry officials and MCDE Headquarters were asked to explain how DEC's were established. The MCDE Headquarters, the institution which was responsible for the process of establishing DEC's, described the process, which should be taken as the official position, as follows:

Communities established DEC's. They came up with a need, in this case, access to secondary education. They put up structures and applied to MCDE headquarters through DEOs (now DEMs) and declared what they had. They would ask for instructional materials and teachers from the DEO. The DEO would in turn visit and inspect the premises and structures and give a feedback to MCDE for approval. If the Ministry requirements had been met, the DEO would be asked to establish a DEC and provide teachers. The DEO provided a teacher-in-charge and teachers from primary schools.

Sometimes communities put up structures and started centres without MCDE knowing. At other times politicians used DEC's as campaign tools. The aspirant came with a chief or community leaders to MCDE to convince officials there of the need for a DEC in their area. Sometimes the structures that communities put up were substandard (From notes of MCDE Group Interview)

Officials at the other levels of the education system were also asked the same question to find out whether the process was understood in the same way for all the levels. This process was echoed at all the levels of the education system by officials interviewed, with varying details. The bottom line was that the initiative started from the local level before other authorities were approached.

All the other categories of participants were asked to describe or explain how their schools started. All the accounts given showed that the initiative was from the local community level. There was a felt need that was then expressed by the communities. In most cases the need was expressed by teachers at the local schools, through the Parents' Teachers' Association or the School Committee, who were concerned with the high rate of repeaters in the last class at primary level. Many pupils passed their school leaving certificate examinations but could not be selected to conventional secondary schools due to lack of space in the existing conventional schools. The matter was taken up to the concerned Village Heads. The Group Village Heads took the issue up to the TA. A meeting with other stakeholders was arranged to discuss the issue. These included the village heads, the school committee, the members of parliament and other authorities in the area. After they agreed on a course of action, they followed the procedure for establishing a DEC as described by the MCDE and Ministry headquarters.

The extracts below show that DEC's started with the community and reflect different aspects of the process although the details differ on how they involved the education offices. The first shows how the idea was hatched and that the school started at a primary school before the community put up structures for it. This is narrated from a pupil's point of view and misses some detail due to the fact that elders did the process without his involvement.

The school committee for primary school and parents initiated the idea of the school. Songani DEC was too far. I was one of the first students of the school when it started at the primary school in 1995. Classes were taking place in the afternoon after the primary school pupils had gone away. The community decided to have their own premises. MASAF was approached and people moulded bricks. Then the school changed to a Community Day Secondary School (Former student, Centre 5).

A teacher who gave a little more detail than that given by the pupil narrated the establishment of the same school from a different point of view. The account includes the politics that was behind the school just as MCDE had intimated that politicians sometimes used DEC's as campaign tools. The school had been hijacked by a parliamentarian into his area when official records indicated that the school was at a different place. The teacher told this version of the school:

People went to the DEO to seek approval to start a school. Approval was granted in the early 1990s but because of the influence of the Member of Parliament at that time, the school went to Katamba at a place called Mkumbira. The Senior Chief learnt from official records that there was a DEC at Nsondole

when it was in fact at Katamba. He followed this up and we managed to have a school here.

Before the school came, I was posted here in 1993 to a DEC that did not exist. In 1995, there was a proposal to have a DEC here but the teacher-in-charge to help me start the DEC did not come at the expected time and so I started the DEC. In March 1995 he came. The DEC started at the primary school. In 1996, the community approached MASAF for funding and the funds were granted. In 1997 the school moved from the primary school (Male Teacher, Centre 5).

The next two extracts show more or less the same story but for different schools. One is an account from a men's focus group discussion and it states as follows:

In 1996 a need was expressed for a school in the area. Selection to secondary school was a problem. Malosa or Balaka secondary schools were not easy to get access to. Fees were high and bus fares were also a problem for far away institutions. Chiefs and their people asked how they could go about this problem. They approached the DEO and the DC and then called for a meeting. A proposal for a school was made. The Machinga DEO advised the committee to approach MASAF for assistance. Two million kwacha was granted. At the meantime, the school had started in borrowed premises at Malosa in the old LEPRAs premises. Fees from the pupils were used for moulding bricks for the foundation. The aim was to have a school here, not in Zomba (Men's FGD Centre 1).

The other account is from a village head:

The school started out of a need for a school for those pupils who passed standard eight examinations but were not selected to secondary schools. The Group Village Headman and six village heads met to discuss the issue of a DEC. The School Committee at Mpinganjira was behind the idea and they wanted this school in their area but there was no land in their village for that purpose. So, Village

Headman Mpima was consulted (Village Head Centre 4).

Generally, communities initiated the school projects and were aware of what needed to be done to establish a DEC but differed slightly on detail of how they implemented the initiatives. The variations in the procedure may be attributed to the fact that the committees were composed of people of different levels in terms of education, exposure and socio-economic backgrounds and the procedure they followed also reflected the composition of the committees as some went to the District Commissioner first while others approached the District Education Officer first. The explanation for this may be that communities were aware that if they needed any assistance in infrastructure, the District Commissioner controlled the District Development Fund but others might not have known the difference between the two offices since in the course of the interviews the word "boma" was used to refer to various government offices. Some started the school first before even approaching the authorities. The important thing to note is that they all seemed to be clear on what the concept of DEC was and that its success depended on them. This is also a reflection of their involvement and the adequate preparation government had done in introducing the concept of MCCC's which changed to DEC and the time given to communities to consult and implement the innovation.

Nature of Community Participation in the Construction of Distance Education Centres

The third objective was to characterize the nature of community participation in the construction of the DEC's. Both key informants and focus groups were asked what part the community played in the construction of the schools. The most popular response from the community key informants and focus groups was: "*Tinapanga Chitukuko*" (We did development work). When asked to describe exactly the activities they did as part of development work, at every school the community was involved in clearing the site, moulding and firing bricks, carrying bricks, water, sand and stones to the construction site and in some cases contributing money to pay for some services such as security. This was a reflection of the self-help concept Malawi adopted at independence where provision of labour was seen as one way of saving on financial costs (Kishindo 1994). The school level participants also confirmed these activities to have taken place. The following quotations illustrate the various ways in which communities participated in the construction of their schools. At one site,

A development committee was elected to supervise the moulding and firing of bricks. Village Heads and their people worked on the moulding and firing of bricks. Then we approached government (DEO) for assistance. Government inspected the place and bricks. People carried bricks on their heads to the site and the first block was constructed through the cooperation of chiefs and councilors (GVH Centre 6).

At another site,

People moulded bricks and collected sand and firewood, and Mr Likaku, the former Mayor of Blantyre, donated a kiln of bricks. Some people offered their oxcarts for carrying firewood and transferring bricks to the site (HM Centre 5).

While in the first two sites people were engaged in brick-making, the third site had a slightly different assignment because the site was near the lake where moulding bricks was not possible because of sand and so the people of the

Three villages, Mpima, Tamvu and Mpinganjira worked on concrete blocks and collecting water and sand. MASAF provided cement (Former DEC and CDSS student Centre 4).

The extracts above show that community participation was mostly at implementation stage where communities provided labour in the slogan *kupanga chitukuko* (doing development work). However, things did not always work so smoothly everywhere. Sometimes community mobilization was a problem. These problems lay in the history of the schools and people's experiences in their involvement in the school projects as the case study below will show. People worked to have the school in place but the government made decisions to take over the school buildings to establish a conventional secondary school and push out the DEC without consulting the people and this affected the community adversely. This made communities around the school shun any further involvement in school development since they felt that the government was just using them to accomplish its end.

CASE STUDY 1: Liwonde CDSS

This is a new site for the school that came into existence just a year before it was turned into a CDSS.

The original site of this school is where the district secondary school is today. The community around this school put up the structures of the school for a DEC, which started in 1978 as a Malawi Correspondence College Centre (MCCC), but after almost twenty years, in 1997, the Ministry of Education asked the community to surrender the buildings to government for a conventional secondary school. With some resistance from the community on the move from the original site, the DEC moved to a primary school more than ten kilometres away. Unfortunately, the school found itself on the wrong side when the district was re-demarcated to form two districts of Balaka and Machinga. This meant that the school had to come back to the original district, Machinga, according to people's demands.

According to the school chair who was serving at that time, the Member of Parliament and the School Committee Chair went to meet authorities of the Roman Catholic Church in Zomba to ask for permission to use the church's primary school in the area for the DEC. Permission was granted and the school moved to St Theresa Primary School. The School Committee chair and his colleagues went to Malawi Housing Corporation to ask for a place to build another school. A place was identified and the community constructed one block with no teacher's house. MASAF came in and constructed one more block and one teacher's house. DANIDA assisted with offices and a library. The teacher's house was being used as administration offices at the time this research was taking place. According to one former School Committee Chair,

Parents resisted this move. They said they did not want to surrender their DEC. There was quite a struggle.

Almost all the participants interviewed at this school described how the present site came into being and the concluding remark was invariably a lament that there was only one house at the school when at the original site they had left five houses. This deprived their teachers of a facility that they should have been enjoying and so the community felt cheated.

This researcher noted that this was the only school where FGDs were not conducted with villagers. Only one FGD was conducted with men from town. The men from town came because they had their children in the school but they might not have experienced what the villagers experienced when the original DEC was taken over by government. Messages were sent to the communities to ask them to

come to the school with their village heads but the villagers did not turn up while their Village Headmen turned up. The explanation given was that if the cooperation of the villagers was to be obtained, then political leaders had to be involved such as the Ward Councilors, the Member of Parliament and other party cadres especially that this area is in the district that the former President Bakili Muluzi came from.

Another explanation given was that if this school was a community school, then it meant the community owned it and had the mandate to develop it as they wished, but the situation was such that all policies and plans came from government without the input of the communities around, hence the reluctance to respond to the call.

There are some observations to be made about this case study. To begin with, it should be noted that it was a centre that had been in existence for almost twenty years before government possessed its buildings without giving the community an alternative. The community felt the gap and this compelled them to find a new place for a new school and put up a building. The first school was constructed during the one party system where development projects were politicized and people participated without option. The second school was built in the multi-party democracy where people had a choice. One can speculate that the people participated in the construction of the first block because of the ownership they had developed in the first school. When history seemed to repeat itself but now introducing more disadvantages, people felt that they had had enough and decided to exercise their freedom by not getting involved any further.

The experiences expressed in this case study agree with Chakwera's observations made in his 2002 study cited in the literature review. He reported that in most schools members of the communities had not been active in developing physical structures as the policy had anticipated. People in the communities were no longer willing to work on development projects for the schools. The schools had been termed CDSSs to underscore community ownership but communities felt that they had lost this ownership because neither their school committees nor their teachers were involved in admissions of students. The conclusion that one can come to is that the community participation expected by government was the provision of labour in the implementation stage and not decision-making as communities had been used to in the DEC.

Level of Community Participation in the Management of Distance Education Centres

The fourth objective was to determine the level of community participation in the management of DEC's. Key informants and FGD participants were asked what part the community played in the running of the DEC in their area. In all the schools, it was established that there were school committees that ran the schools on behalf of the communities as the quotation below shows.

The School Committee and the PTA were formed from those parents with children in the school. The School Committee was the eye of the community (HM Centre 5).

However, some participants indicated that the communities did not do anything else for the school after construction work had been completed. This is consistent with community participation as a means according to Miraftab (2003) where participation may be efficient and cost effective in the implementation stage but leave communities without real influence in decision-making. Either the participants did not know that the school committees were running the schools for the communities or they did not know of their existence at all, but the majority acknowledged the existence and the activities of the school committees. Some of the activities of the school committees mentioned were, to mobilize parents when necessary for development work, to run the boarding facilities where they existed, to help in disciplining and controlling students, to encourage students to attend classes, to monitor teachers' activities, to look after the

teachers' welfare and to assist the school wherever they were needed. A response from a women's FGD to reflect these activities indicated that

A School Committee was elected to run the school on behalf of the people, to look into the maintenance of the school and further development. Parents contributed money for the post office box and other things (Women's FGD Centre 5).

A teacher also acknowledged the role played by the community through the school committee in another school in this way:

The community ran the girls' hostels, monitored the girls' movements and provided security to the place. They also assisted the boys who were renting houses in the villages (Male Teacher Centre 3).

On the whole, communities thought that their work was over with the setting up or construction of the school and the management of the school was the responsibility of the school personnel and the school committee. Very few community members could confidently say they were involved in the management of the school unless they were directly involved in the school committee. This may be a reflection of how the committees operated, that is, they involved parents who had their children or wards in the school and they did not consult the villagers on decisions made in the school or they did not report to the community on what was happening in the school.

The above situation may be explained as token participation but on the placation rung where the structural forms for participation

exist but a closer look reveals that no effective communication upwards takes place and local people have no influence in the direction and execution of development activities and their views are not sought in decision-making. The people on the school committee do not seem to be accountable to the community and therefore do not involve them in decision-making and the people therefore do not have an input on what is happening in the schools.

The other reason is that school committees did not seem to have specific terms of office so that once a committee was elected into office, it remained in office as long as the members of the committee were still available in the community. If the terms existed, then they were not strictly adhered to. As a result people forgot about their existence either because they were not active or, as reported, in some cases committees were personalized in such a way that some members of the committees resisted change which in turn frustrated or threatened other members of the community especially where the incumbent committees did not seem to perform. Such frustration was voiced in one FGD as follows:

The school committee disintegrated. The Headmaster is not eager to elect a new committee. There is one person who is running the school as a committee. Because of the way he is operating, most of the members decided to withdraw (Men's FGD Centre 1).

Where a committee was elected and remained in office for too long and problems of representation arose as indicated above, then

children growing up into adults in the community and new members in the community were very unlikely to know them. They operated as individuals without the community's blessings and they were very much unlikely to call for meetings. Some members of the school committees resisted change because they personally benefited from running the schools. Fees in DEC's varied so much and there were no proper records kept. According to the then Director of Planning at the Ministry Headquarters, it was only the students who knew how much they were paying. Some of this money was misappropriated by school committees and this was one reason given by the Ministry Headquarters for taking over the schools in order to standardize the running of the schools.

This also reflected the concept of participation that the members of the communities had. Participation in school activities meant supplying labour for construction work. Involvement in the management of the school was seen as a specialized area for the school personnel and the few who were elected into the school committee. This may be explained by the way in which the people were involved from the beginning. There was a standard contribution expected of the communities whenever development work was being undertaken according to Kishindo (1994). They contributed their labour. Beyond that, they did not take it as their responsibility. This happens when community participation is used as a means and not an end. Communities are able to alleviate their problems without

accomplishing the ultimate goal of participation, that is, empowerment.

When this study was taking place, CDSSs had been in existence for over five years and yet in all the schools, the school committees found had been inherited from the DEC. The terms of reference for school committees obtained from the Division Headquarters are part of a larger document dated 30th May 2003 (Appendix 3) and were meant for all secondary schools regardless of their type. It is most likely that this document had not yet reached schools at the time of data collection since none of the schools had it, reflecting poor communication in the education system between the Ministry Headquarters and its schools.

Change from DEC to CDSS

When Ministry officials were asked to explain what led to the Ministry's decision to convert DECs to CDSSs, the major reason given was that the Ministry wanted to improve the quality of teaching and learning in these centres and to standardize the running of these centres since there were so many variations in the activities of these centres. The interview with the Director of Planning, referred to earlier, outlined the following reasons for the change:

- The type of education offered in DECs was lower than that offered in conventional secondary schools because

government was not involved in DEC finances and provisions. The environment was not conducive for learning and therefore government wanted to raise the standards to conventional secondary school level.

- In a majority of cases, the environment prevailing in DECs encouraged certain practices not conducive to moral standards and good education. When students squattered around the DECs boys and girls made “secret marriages” which affected morals and health. On the average, 17 out of 100 girls who joined DECs made it to form 4 as the rest of them, 83%, could not complete their secondary education because of pregnancy, ill health due to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or they got married.
- Teachers-in-charge charged various fees but no accounts were maintained. Only students knew what they paid. There was nothing in schools except sets due to misappropriation of funds. Therefore the institutions were brought under public domain as the government standardized and collected all fees. All books and monies became public.
- There was lack of general discipline and more laxity in DECs. There were no rules from the Ministry (Director of Planning, Headquarters).

The Director of Planning further disclosed that reports came to government as a result of the 1984-1994 Education Plan Evaluation, by DANIDA, which gave the status of education in the country. The reports indicated that DEC's needed government intervention and that parents who were beneficiaries of DEC's were not benefiting. The second report indicated that the graduates of DEC's at Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) and Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) levels were lower in quality than those of other institutions due to subject accumulation. To obtain a JCE, one needs a minimum of six subject passes including English and these are normally obtained at one seating after two years of study in secondary school. For MSCE, one needs to study for two years after JCE and obtain a minimum of six subject passes including English. Most graduates got their certificates after a longer period than the two years by taking one or two subjects per year or making up for the shortfall at first seating. Although these graduates were of a lower academic quality, they joined the teaching profession, thereby diluting education quality.

The Director further noted that in certain places there were too many DEC's and there was no control. It depended on how active the DEO was. Government needed to control this. The other levels of the education hierarchy also echoed the above reasons and added the need to "increase access to secondary education in terms of government selection" (PEO HQ, DEM 5) and that

The schools had already transformed themselves to community schools in terms of infrastructure and systems. They were no longer distance education centres but secondary schools at community level. The Ministry was giving autonomy to communities to regularize the systems (DEM 2).

The MCDE Headquarters said they did not know the real reason for the change but repeated what they said they had heard from the Ministry, which they disputed in some cases as follows:

We were not involved but we were told that there was a study by DANIDA on poor secondary school structures, under-qualified teachers etc. The Ministry might have listened to the story of poor secondary schools – poorly provided for. The words used were “to improve quality of learning” in community secondary schools but some DEC’s run by Catholics were much better than conventional secondary schools and so what was meant by quality was difficult to conceive. From outsiders it was the case of 250 secondary schools (Group interview with MCDE Officials).

School level and community responses indicated that there was no consultation. Most of the respondents gave their responses depending on how they got the message. Some got the announcement through the radio, others through political rallies. Some students reported that their school heads announced the change during assemblies as one student said,

We heard about it at assembly. There was no further information (Former DEC and CDSS Student Centre 1).

Some responses showed that people just heard of the change or they were told at some gathering informally. Some women and men in

FGDs could not specify how they got the message but they “heard” about it. This is what they had to say:

We do not know, we just heard of the change. It might have been due to overcrowding and scarcity of foodstuffs (Women’s FGD Centre 6).

We just heard from government. We had no say in it. (Men’s FGD Centre 4).

Village heads and chiefs also indicated that they did not know why the change was brought in. These are the voices of some of them:

We just received the name but there was no explanation (Chief Centre 5).

I was not informed of anything (Village Head Centre 2).

A few participants indicated that there was some agreement of some sort between the government and people. These sentiments came from all centres, three of which are illustrated below.

Government brought the change. We were consulted and we agreed with the DC and development advisors (Women’s FGD Centre 5).

The school Committee and government agreed (Men’s FGD Centre 4).

It was a government agreement with the people (Male Former Student Centre 3).

The responses above came from women’s and men’s focus group discussions and the former male student was also an adult member of the community. However, the people could not adequately support their responses as to how the agreement was reached with the people as they alleged. It should be noted that these were people who had

lived a better part of their lives in the one-party system and some of them were quite guarded in their responses. They might not have wanted to appear to be critical of the government for fear of what might happen to them. Some might still have memories of arrests and beatings that happened to anyone who was perceived as being critical of government. Others might have thought that this researcher was representing some government department and wanted to make sure that they said the right things.

Some students saw the change as a government response to increased demand for secondary education.

Change came from public demand for more secondary schools (Boys' FGD Centre 1).

A few other participants saw the change as inevitable, as a natural progression of the school from a lower level to something higher. The voices of the people from the different communities illustrate this notion of progression in the following terms:

Just as Liwonde Secondary School changed, the same happened. There were too many pupils so they had to be divided (Boys' FGD Centre 2).

DEC was only the beginning. CDSS was a promotion (Women's FGD Centre 4).

This was an established school. It deserved the promotion (GVH Centre 1).

What these responses point at is that the decision to change the DEC to CDSSs did not come from the grassroots but it was a top-

down decision which the communities had to come to terms with and therefore they had to rationalize the decision based on some assumptions which might not have been valid.

The boys in one group were speaking from the experience of their school whose original premises had been taken over by government and turned into a conventional secondary school. It did not come as a surprise to them even if there was no consultation or explanation from government. As for the others, that was the only rational explanation they could think of under the circumstances.

Some participants attributed the change to donors. Those who did this associated the change with the donor operating in their schools at the time of the change or because of their privileged positions in the education or school systems. A girls' FGD suggested that "It was the sponsor's initiative" (Girls' FGD Centre 2) because their school was being assisted by an international non-governmental organization at the time of change. A teacher at the same school also expressed the same sentiments when he said,

In 1999, Danish Aid provided funds to improve systems in DEC's. The name changed at their request (Male Teacher Centre 2).

The Principal Education Officer at the Ministry Headquarters did not come out clearly but alluded to the same idea of a donor having been behind the change as she said,

There might have been a donor behind it but we did not see them coming in the open. For example, DANIDA came with full force in introducing TRF (textbook revolving fund), building libraries and providing bursaries focused on CDSS and not boarding schools (Principal Education Officer HQ).

In a lot of cases, the change was attributed to political figures such as the State President, government ministers and Members of Parliament. One girls' group thought that the State President had collaborated with all stakeholders to bring in the change. This is what they thought:

It was President Bakili Muluzi, through the Ministry of Education in collaboration with teachers and parents, who changed it (Girls' FGD Centre 3).

Apart from the President, the change was attributed to the members of parliament in the area as the two quotations below show.

MP Makhumula changed it (Male Parent of both DEC and CDSS Students Centre 5).

We do not know why there was that change but it is the late Meki Mtewa as MP who did it but no explanation was given (Men's FGD Centre 4).

The majority of the responses indicated that the change was a directive from the government or the Ministry of Education. At community level, it was a government decision but for varied reasons as a former student and a school committee chair say:

Government brought the change after it had failed to meet President Bakili Muluzi's promise of building 250 secondary schools in the country. DEC's were turned to secondary schools to fulfill this promise. It was a government decree (Former Female DEC Student Centre 5).

The Division Management decided on the change. The government decided to promote the school (Current School Committee Chair Centre 3).

To those in the education system the change was a directive which they simply implemented as one head of school and one deputy head indicated:

The change came as a directive from the Ministry of Education (HM Centre 3).

The circular from government made the change. This was a policy to restructure (DHM Centre 2).

One thing to note is that the word "boma" translated as government was used to refer to different offices. These were: the Ministry of Education Headquarters, MCDE Headquarters, Division and District Education offices, the President and the Minister of Education. Sometimes this was extended to organizations like MASAF and Save the Children. The people saw these as working on behalf of the government. However, by saying that the government brought the change, most people referred to the Ministry of Education and its various levels or the President and the Minister of Education or other top politicians.

After asking how the change came about, another question was asked to the communities on how they felt about the change. Some responses showed that in some areas people accepted the change with pain and resignation since they felt too powerless to fight against the government. Other responses showed that there was resistance in

some areas but that resistance did not get far. Some people were excited about the change because they thought it was a change for the better, which would relieve the communities of their responsibilities on the schools and improve education standards. There were yet others who were indifferent to the change. Some had mixed feelings. Teachers were happy about the change as it reduced the pupil/teacher ratio. However, some lamented the waste of resources the change brought where available space was not fully utilized.

Out of those who accepted the change, some gave no reason apart from just accepting the change, but there were some who accepted it with reasons. Among those who did not have any reason were the following voices:

We just accepted because it was a government decision (Female Parent of a DEC Student Centre 6).

We accepted without questioning (Former DEC School Committee Chair Centre 4).

We accepted without understanding (Former Male DEC and CDSS Student 3).

Most of those who were happy with the change indicated that they were happy in anticipation of greater improvements to come, but got disappointed when their expectations were not met. The voices below were captured at various centres:

We accepted in anticipation for change but nothing has happened. We cannot ask anyone (Men's FGD Centre 5).

We were happy because we thought government was going to take responsibility but nothing has changed (Men's FGD Centre 3).

I was happy because when I was at DEC, the school was poorly provided for but the change would bring more teachers, more learning and more provisions (Former Female Student Centre 4).

Teachers were happy because the change made the classes smaller, more manageable and at the same time improved the quality of the students that were admitted to the schools. One teacher summarizes her relief as follows:

The change was good because it brought control on admission that was lacking in DEC. Teaching was very difficult in DEC since even incapable students found their way there. The quality of pupils is better now (Female Teacher DEC and CDSS Centre 5).

Those who were unhappy with the change gave various reasons for their dissatisfaction. The voice of one male teacher summarizes sentiments that were expressed from different centres and by different categories of participants:

The change was not good because as a DEC most students with passes got a place. As CDSS those selected are not from surrounding villages. Those in the community are not benefiting from the school. The community is therefore reluctant to participate in development work. They ask us to get parents from where the pupils come from. The government did not consult. People say that since the government is selecting pupils and no parents are coming to ask for places, government should do everything (Male Teacher DEC and CDSS Centre 3).

The results presented in this chapter were general to all the sites visited but the intensity of the issues raised differed from site to site. The quotations used were meant to show that these were sentiments from various sites and from different categories of people.

From the voices of the participants presented in this section, it is clear that the change from DEC to CDSS was effected without consultation with the communities concerned. No preparation was made for the communities to understand the CDSS concept. As a result the change was viewed more negatively than positively by most stakeholders. With time, those who had been positive about the change were disillusioned and began to see the disadvantages of the change. The voices also showed that those introducing the idea did not understand the principles of community participation as the basic requirements were ignored and this undermined the whole concept of CDSS. The community was ignored.

Change in Community Participation

The fifth objective was to investigate changes, if any, in community participation brought in by the change in status from DEC to CDSS. Ministry Officials were asked to assess the involvement of the communities in the schools before and after their conversion to CDSSs. Key informants and FGDs were asked to explain in which set up they felt community participation in the affairs of the school was more, when they were run as a DEC or CDSS?

Ministry officials interviewed were divided on where they thought participation was better, depending on what they understood to be participation or involvement of the communities. Some felt that there was no change while others thought that participation was better in the DECs than in CDSSs and yet others thought that participation was better in CDSSs. Those who thought that community participation was still high or that there was no change in both cases mostly thought of it in terms of providing labour in putting up structures as follows:

Community participation has not changed much. Parents are still providing infrastructure (Director of Planning HQs).

There has been an improvement in involvement. People are willing to construct, for example, in Balaka people are still building (DEM 1).

The Community is more involved now, for example, communities assisted by MASAF are still putting up structures (Division Planning Officer).

Those who thought that community participation had declined thought of participation as being more than providing labour for construction of buildings, but involving communities in decision-making and controlling the activities of the school. They realized that there had been a shift of power from communities to government in decision-making and controlling the activities of the school. As the Principal Education Officer noted,

There was more participation at DEC because the community did everything. At CDSSs government has a share no matter how minimal. I am not sure if

inspectors visit the schools (Principal Education Officer HQ).

However, the Principal Education Officer was only being modest when she said that the government's share was minimal. The truth was that the government was making the decisions for the schools. This is in contrast with the opinions from the district officers who clearly indicated that community participation in DEC's was more. The two quotations from two districts illustrate this:

Community involvement was better in DEC's. Communities were fully empowered and active and District Councils were also active (DEM 3).

Communities participated more in DEC's as they had a bigger say in the affairs of the school and they could mobilize themselves in controlling the affairs of the school because they felt the school belonged to them. The school committee and the school management did the selection of the pupils but now the Ministry controls the schools. Now communities feel they have been left out (DEM 5).

The above responses show that those who understood community participation in terms of community mobilization for construction work felt that community participation was still very strong while those who thought of it as more than the provision of labour and included the running of the school and participating in decision-making for the school viewed the participation as low or restricted. However, the majority of the Ministry officials felt that community participation had declined with the introduction of CDSS.

The other reasons for the contradiction was that some of the respondents were afraid of contradicting the Ministry's decision of establishing CDSS, and so they gave the "right answers" that the Ministry would want to hear. It was a matter of defending the move although they could see some problems in the policy. One observation made by the researcher was that data collection for this study was taking place during the restructuring in education where District Education Officers were being replaced by District Education Managers who were university graduates as opposed to primary school teachers who filled the positions of District Education Officers. Some offices were run by graduates while others still had DEOs who were primary school teachers. Apart from one university graduate ministry official who indicated that the participation was higher in DEC's, all university graduates felt participation was lower and all primary school teachers felt it was higher. The primary school teachers were less critical. It was clear from the interviews that the one university graduate who indicated that participation was higher was more on the defensive and did not want to be seen to be critical of the CDSS policy although he admitted the government was reconsidering some aspects of the policy.

Teachers and school heads indicated that community participation was better in the DEC's than in CDSS. They pointed at those aspects that had been taken away from the schools that made communities feel they were in control as the reasons for reduction or

absence of community participation, namely, policies and plans, finances and selection. These quotations were captured from three different centres as follows:

The community owned the school and had the mandate to develop it as they wished. Now policies and plans come from Headquarters (Male Teacher Centre 2).

Participation was better in DEC's because the community could work with school and project committees and decided what to do. Today money goes to government (Male Teacher Centre 4).

There were more students and therefore more parents. Participation was high. Those with no children at the school do not come. They say that the school is government funded, so why work? (HM Centre 5)

These sentiments expressed by school personnel are supported by Chakwera's observations (2005) that the introduction of government selection in CDSS, though done in good faith, deprived communities of the ownership of the schools that were founded on community initiative to meet local needs and that communities were not happy because selection had sometimes favoured students who might come from outside the immediate communities and left out those from nearby villages.

Communities gave contradictory responses on community participation, even where the same school was the subject, but the majority felt that participation was better in a DEC than in CDSS. The contradictions came in as a result of the differences in understanding

the rules governing CDSS and DEC. However, the majority felt that participation was more and better in DEC for the following reasons:

Participation was more in DEC but now the school is in the hands of government (Male Former Student Centre3).

There was more participation in DEC. Parents were easily mobilized. Now it is government, people take it as government. There is low response from parents because the school is now being taken as government – people take it as government. There is low response from parents because the school is now being taken as government property. Therefore money should work (Former School Committee Member Centre 1).

For many community members, the takeover of CDSS by government meant that the government was going to provide everything and the communities were relieved of their responsibilities over the schools. These views were expressed in all the centres by the different categories of participants as the labels accompanying the quotations show. This thinking was based on the people's knowledge and experience of the conventional secondary schools according to Lewin's (2001) description of the various categories of secondary schools earlier cited.

In most schools, school committees were not as effective as they were in DEC. Most of the committees that existed had been inherited from the DEC but the school committees and the school administration found it very difficult to work together. This was because the terms of reference of the school committees as DEC no

longer applied to the situation prevailing in CDSS. The Ministry of Education did not provide enough guidance when the CDSS policy was introduced. As a result, the school personnel did not know how to work with the school committees and the school committees felt that the schools were just being uncooperative. The letter that introduced the CDSS policy to all levels of the education system (appendix 4) had this to say regarding the working relationship between school committees and the school personnel: "The local communities, through school committees, will continue playing a major role in the affairs of the schools including development, management and pupil and teacher discipline. Guidelines for the role of the school committees in CDSSs will be provided by the Ministry" (paragraph 9).

At the time of data collection for this study, the guidelines were not yet available in the schools visited and this was almost six years after the conversion of DEC to CDSSs. Later, the researcher got a copy of the guidelines from the division offices which were contained in a bigger document dated May 2003. However, the guidelines were not specifically for CDSS but were general to all secondary schools.

The situation was made worse by the fact that some heads who replaced teachers-in-charge had not worked in DEC before and therefore did not know where to start from in terms of community participation under the new set up. Some community members expressed their desperation over the situation as follows:

There was better participation as a DEC. The School Committee was more effective. Teachers and parents were better organized. Parents now have no channel of communication. Now it is government (Women's FGD, Centre 6).

Some projects that had started in DECs could not continue because rules that operated in the DECs could not apply to CDSS and so communities were waiting for the government to take the lead and yet the government expected them to carry on with the projects as they did in the DECs. Community participation in CDSS seemed to be a contradiction to the prevailing situation as some participants noted:

In DEC, there were more children more parents and more work. CDSS belongs to government but the DEC belonged to us and therefore we were committed to it (Men's FGD Centre 5).

In investigating change in community participation, the study established that most respondents felt that there was more participation in DECs than in CDSSs. One of the major reasons given was that CDSS belonged to government and not to the community.

In DECs, school committees controlled the centre finances, initiated projects and implemented them. The school committees and the school personnel controlled pupils' admissions into the school. In CDSS, it was reported that all the money collected from school fees went to government and so even if the existing committees wanted to initiate development projects, they were handicapped because the money was not there. Apart from that, school fees had been

standardized and any extra fees charged had to be approved by the Ministry of Education. These extra fees were small and the number of students in the schools was too small for the extra fees to fund any meaningful development project. In DEC's, the money stayed in the schools and the school committee could use it to develop the school. Even where the communities felt they could do something to contribute to the efficient running of the schools, they were handicapped because their channel for participation had been closed. School committees were either non-functional or were not recognized by the school personnel.

A question was asked to all categories of respondents how the schools changed from DEC to CDSS and whether they had been involved or prepared for the change in the process. The responses to this question were varied but it was clear that the government made the change without any consultation with communities or any of the stakeholders or at least preparing them for the change. One major stakeholder, MCDE, complained:

We were not involved. Government had an upper hand in the decision despite resistance from communities. In some cases there were delays. Only technical people were involved. The Ministry did not come open on the issue. The decision was made at Ministry. MCDE should have been on the forefront but it wasn't. The decision came through a radio announcement (Group Interview, MCDE Headquarters).

One would have expected that government should have discussed the issue with MCDE first since MCDE was in charge of the schools as they were the ones giving consent on the establishment of the schools and to some extent were responsible for the provision of teaching and learning materials. MCDE had the overseer role on the schools and after all, MCDE was a department under the Ministry of Education.

Community consent seemed to have been assumed when this decision was made. One Ministry Official said that she thought that communities had been consulted since "they agreed with the Ministry's promise for teachers, a promise that we have not fulfilled up to now" (Principal Education Officer HQ). Another said,

The decision to convert DEC's to CDSSs was done without prior consultation (Director of Planning HQ).

All the other Education Officials confirmed that there was no consultation and those who were not in office then also indirectly confirmed this. The decision was described "as a Ministry ruling without any consultation" and "top-down". Those who were not in office described what was happening but indicated that there were no consultations in the following ways:

In terms of informing them, yes they were, but not involving and consulting them (DEM 2).

The public was not much involved in making this decision. Maybe some representatives were involved especially those in key positions, for example, DEOs and a few head teachers. This could have been due to lack of time and resources for consultation (Division Planning Officer).

The case study below illustrates some of the community frustrations that were expressed in the various centres but were typified in Ulongwe CDSS. The disappointment registered by various individuals and groups in the extracts above shows lack of partnership between the development agency, in this case, government and the communities. As noted earlier, partnership is based on dialogue among various actors or stakeholders during which development agenda is jointly set.

The case of Ulongwe illustrates the community's frustration on how the school was running. There was so much space being wasted and the buildings were being vandalized. If the government had been open to dialogue as participatory development demands, individual considerations could have been made for such a school. It was senseless to the community to have a single stream in a school capable of accommodating three streams. Both teachers and communities felt powerless as some expressed that they were being used to implement decisions that were made elsewhere. People want to be involved in situations they are going to benefit from. Since communities and school personnel felt left out, they were reluctant to involve themselves further.

CASE STUDY 2: Ulongwe CDSS

The school started out of a need for secondary education for those pupils who did not make it to secondary school through government selection. The TA in the area, village heads and their people decided to

have a school in the area. Through the Village Development Committee, people organized themselves and moulded bricks. They approached the appropriate government authorities who inspected the bricks and the place. There was no other secondary school or DEC in the area. The nearest schools were in Balaka and Mangochi. Permission was granted to establish the school.

From the various interviews conducted, it was learnt that a number of organizations had been involved in the various phases of the school's construction and development. It was the villagers who first put up a block and one teacher's house, and then there was another organization which was identified by some participants as the International Development Agency (IDA) or Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC), which put up one more block and one teacher's house, and then the German organization, GTZ, put up one more block, students' hostels and the kitchen. The Catholic Church was also said to have been involved at some stage.

The community was so anxious to see this school take off the ground that they were prepared to use equipment borrowed from villagers while waiting for supplies from donor organizations. The Group Village Head, who at that time was an employee of the school in the boarding explained:

We cleaned the place before the students came. The school did not have enough equipment and had to borrow some from the villagers such as cooking sticks and ladles. There are those utensils that people use at weddings and other big functions. We went to borrow those. We used them for over a month. Even buckets/pails used for drawing water were ours. Then, the government brought in equipment and we used it. We returned the borrowed equipment to the villagers.

The people's major concerns at the school were the loss of boarding facilities, the neglect of the school buildings and premises and the wastage of space at the school. According to the community, the loss of boarding facilities negatively affected students' academic performance and moral behaviour. The following extracts are the voices of the community.

The way I see things, when students were here and when they are now out, as a village head I see that students have problems. It is not good as I see it as a parent. The sorts of structures that they are renting are structures not worth renting. A few villagers are building reasonable structures according to village standards. When students are there with villagers,

they all look and behave the same. The villagers do not assist the students on appropriate behaviour. In their perception, they are enjoying themselves, but to me as a parent, there is a problem. Students need a secure place. We are worried about this and we wonder what the government is going to do about it. Teachers do not see what is happening out there (GVH).

Various women's groups echoed the GVH's sentiments as follows:

When the school changed from DEC to CDSS, we were worried because when the students were staying here, they had adequate security, but now that they are staying out, they have no security. Their study time is also affected because they chat and play for a good part of the night because teachers are not there, but in the past, teachers would be supervising them.

We felt that it was not good for the school to be changed into a CDSS because there is no security there. Students are disorganized.

When it comes to learning, it is not enough. Students are on their own most of the time. That is what parents are complaining about. If you observe what is happening, there is no difference between students and non-students because when they meet in the evening, their behaviour is just the same ----hemp smoking or drunkenness. When they were staying here, as the earlier speaker has said, let us face it, the unruly ones were unruly for the sake of being unruly, but the majority was trying hard to behave themselves.

I just want to add that when the students were staying here, their education was good and their behaviour was also good, but now many girls easily become pregnant and others learn to smoke hemp. The DEC had its problems but we cannot compare them with what we have now. Students are unruly and teachers fail to control them and just leave them to do what they want and in the end the students have no protection.

At the end of the day, where they are renting, you find them in pairs, a boy and a girl, that is a "married" couple. So we see that we are gaining very

little. In the past, they were protected day and night because they were staying here. Teachers are now powerless before their own students because the school is in the hands of government. We are just asking that one day we should go back to the system that we had before.

The men's groups had exactly the same story to tell as the women's groups. They noted that students spent a lot of their time on video entertainment and that there was a lot of unexplained absenteeism and one of the contributing factors was that students stayed up until early hours of the morning and were too sleepy to go to school in the morning. When students stayed in the boarding, teachers would know who was sick and who was not and so no one could stay in the boarding without permission from teachers.

Teachers also shared the community's concerns on students' performance. One of the teachers interviewed noted that when it was a boarding school, it was easy to monitor students but as a day school monitoring was very difficult. Students' performance was also better in the DEC days. The teacher also expressed concern on the long distances traveled each day by some students, and most probably on empty stomachs and the time the students were kept in school without any food was too long. This reduced concentration as the day wore out.

A lot of space in the school was being wasted. When the school was a DEC, it was running a double stream and the classrooms overflowed with students. The school had the capacity to run even three streams in terms of infrastructure. The head of the school narrated the plans they had when the boarding facilities were being phased out and how the Ministry had failed to respond to community's needs and to the school's circumstances.

We had more students as a DEC but as CDSS the number is limited to fifty. By the end of the term, the number is reduced to twenty and by the time they get to form 4, the number is reduced to ten. For example, these rooms you see there were dormitories for students, but when we were phasing out the boarding, there were plans that we would have a double stream and we prepared the rooms for the classrooms. But because only fifty were selected, the rooms have been left idle. CDSS is admitting very few students, not enough for a double stream. This area has more than forty primary schools. The number selected from the schools is very small, leaving many children with nothing to do. The DEC had no limit.

Apart from wastage of space, there was wastage of infrastructure through neglect and vandalism since the buildings were not being used and there was general untidiness in the school.

When we compare the DEC and the CDSS we see that there was better care of the school premises in the DEC when the students stayed here.

The surroundings are not being taken care of, as a school should be. It is different from when the students were here. We could see that these are school premises. At present, the situation is unpleasant.

In addition, this is a big school. In our area, when we talk of a big school, it is this one. But when we compare it with the primary school there, there is a difference. The primary school is more respectable when it should be the other way round.

The DEC was better in many ways. This place was tidy but today it is a bush and very unpleasant to look at. We are not happy with the current situation.

The head and his teachers agreed with the villagers on the state of the buildings and the school premises. Their explanation was that it was easier to mobilize students' labour when they were all in one place and indeed the place was beautiful. On the buildings, it was learnt that the school committee used to be active in the DEC days and any breakages were promptly attended to. The blocks that were used as hostels were protected from outsiders by the students' presence there. As CDSS the place was abandoned and open to vandalism.

Community participation in the affairs of the school had declined. One teacher observed that:

Since the school changed to CDSS, I have not heard of a parent being asked to come here to discuss issues concerning their children.

The men's groups confirmed the problem in community participation. The school committee was perceived to have been more powerful in DEC because it got involved in the affairs of the students on a daily basis, but in CDSS, when the students were with their parents, their welfare was in the hands of their parents. They also regretted the lack of cooperation between the school administration and the school committee.

I speak on behalf of the School Committee. Recently there has been a lot of finger pointing. If the School Committee and the teachers are pointing fingers at each other, there is a problem. If they do that, there is no trust since each does their own thing.

Other villagers blamed the problems the school was facing on the inactivity of the School Committee.

The problem is the School Committee because when the committee is aware of problems, it should not be difficult for them to convene a meeting and discuss even if the teachers are not there. They can discuss issues on their own. How was it possible that the School Committee could summon people and instruct them on what they should do?

This case study clearly illustrates the problems of lack of partnership between the community and the government regarding the issues surrounding the school or the schools. Since the decision to change DECs to CDSS was made without community participation the decision was a "one-size-fits-all" situation but this case study shows that individual differences should have been considered.

The type of participation that took place in this case ranged from nonparticipation to token participation, which according to the conceptual framework is between the rung of therapy and information where in therapy the doctor knows it all and the patient should take the prescription without questioning even when the patient can obviously see that the prescription is making their condition worse. The patient is expected to adjust to the treatment instead of the doctor adapting the treatment to the patient. When the patient dies, that is

when an investigation is instituted to avoid similar deaths when the death could have been avoided by listening to the patient's problems with the treatment.

Those who have decision-making power are deliberately holding on to power and refusing to give the powerless space. As a result of this treatment, communities around Ulongwe found themselves unable to participate in the activities of CDSS even when they could see things disintegrating. They had no voice as they said their channel of participation had been closed since the school committee was nonfunctional in CDSS.

While the government had good intentions in introducing the change, what can be seen is that the same problem that faced DEC's is manifesting itself in a different manner. When DEC's were being introduced, there were plans and clear guidelines for their operation but what turned out was that the government forgot its responsibilities over the schools as stipulated in Circular Ref: MCC/ADM/67/12/1 of 30th January 1967 and an earlier Ministry Circular 5/66 of 24th February 1966. This is what the two circulars said: "Centres will be under the professional control of the Malawi Correspondence College and teachers will be required to work under the guidance of the Principal of the College" (1966) and "Members of the Correspondence College will visit and advise the Correspondence Centres and the Night secondary Schools as often as possible. It has

been agreed that members of the inspectorate will visit and advise at the Centre where possible" (1967).

As has been explained in the preceding sections, the change to CDSS came in to correct a situation that had got out of hand in terms of overcrowding, overcharging fees and misappropriation of school funds, moral decay and general poor pupil behaviour. With proper monitoring and supervision, some of these evils could have been checked at an earlier stage. With partnership between government and the communities, a way of monitoring the situation could have been worked out but as the government forgot its role, communities also forgot the rules given as no one checked on them. Numbers swelled from the approved minimum of 20 and a maximum of 40 per class to classes as big as 500 and other rules were flouted as well.

CDSSs seem to face the same fate of lack of supervision as some of the problems expressed in the case study simply need an official to visit and see for a decision to be taken but because no one seems to visit them, the problems are left for another major decision to be taken after a lot of damage has been done.

What the case study shows also is that there was no deliberate plan by government to assist communities to achieve the higher rungs of participation. What is seen is the communities moving between non-participation and token participation and sometimes it seemed

communities had decision-making powers as they handled the school funds but this was more by default than by design since there was no one from the government side to work with as originally planned. This is why the government was able to take the decision unilaterally. The other issue to note is that for communities to move up the participation ladder, they needed an organized and resourced base from which to work and to which they were accountable. The communities did not have such bases as the Director of Planning indicated that fees were paid but no records were kept and the school committees were accountable to no one. Communities may be said to have been working more using common sense than systematically following a plan.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study set out to assess community participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi by investigating community involvement in how DEC's were established and managed; in the decision to change their status from DEC's to CDSS; and in their management as CDSS.

The initiative to establish DEC's came from communities in order to provide secondary education to local children who could not be absorbed in the district and national secondary schools. Communities not only participated in the creation of the infrastructure but also participated in the management of the centres. Despite their financial dependence on government and other donors, communities were able to organize themselves and manage the DEC's so that some had boarding facilities comparable, if not better, than those of district schools. A few others instituted boarding facilities along the lines of conventional secondary schools depending on their source of funding.

A presidential decree converted DEC's into CDSS's. There was no prior consultation with stakeholders. It is generally thought that the decree was meant to cover up government's failure to fulfill the electoral promise to build 250 new secondary schools in the first term in office. The conversion from DEC's to CDSS created a new reality for local communities because control and ownership of the now renamed CDSS passed from local communities to government. This had implications for community participation.

The study found that community participation was greater and better in the DEC's than it was in CDSS. This was because new procedures and rules for selecting students into schools and management of finances effectively excluded communities. Whereas in DEC's fees were determined by school committees and retained in the schools to be used to develop infrastructure and provide services for students, under the CDSS arrangement all the fees went to central government. A school committee could only charge extra fees with the prior approval of government.

The catchment area for CDSS was wider than that of the DEC and included what were viewed as "strangers". These "strangers" had not helped bring the schools into being. The enrolment of "strangers" in a community school, especially if it was at the expense of local children, contributed to a lowered motivation in CDSS-related activities.

The absence of clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education on the role of communities in CDSS made community participation problematic. This is largely because the school committee, which was a feature of primary schools and DEC's and played a very important role in the management of school affairs, did not feature in CDSS management structure. This made it difficult for the schools and the communities to work together.

For many of the informants in the study, the conversion of DEC's into CDSS's implied government assuming responsibility for providing for every need in the schools and in effect relieving communities of the responsibilities that they had previously. Government, on the other hand, expected communities to continue meeting the needs of the schools as was the case when they were DEC's. This conflict of expectation is a clear manifestation of the lack of consultation with communities prior to the decision to effect the conversion.

The results of this study show that community participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi was enormous in the DEC in terms of volume but not in quality. This is because it failed to empower communities, that is, giving them the ability to share, influence, or control, design decision-making and authority in development projects and programmes that affect their lives and resources.

What was witnessed in the development of DEC's was token community participation where participation was used as a means and not an end. Participation as a means mobilizes communities as a way to achieve effective and efficient project implementation (Miraftab 2003). This improves the conditions of the community but does not proceed beyond the duration of the project. Communities were able to build schools and thereby bringing a service to their community which otherwise would not have been possible. They alleviated their problems by providing secondary education to those children who would otherwise have not been able to access secondary education.

When DEC's were converted to CDSS there was no consultation made by the government with the communities that had worked to have the DEC's in their areas. This situation lies between non-participation and token participation. In token participation, communities are informed of the decisions made without their involvement. If they are consulted, they have no influence on the decision made after the consultations. The decision-maker selects who to consult and how to make use of the information obtained.

Community participation at CDSS declined to non-participation since the main areas where the community participated in school affairs had been removed when government took over the selection of students and control of finances. The ownership that existed in the DEC was lost and the communities felt alienated since all the

decisions were now coming from government. In all the schools visited enrolment was lower than the capacities of the schools. There was a lot of wastage and yet many children in the communities around could have benefited from the space. Infrastructure in some schools was being destroyed through vandalism because of not being used. The communities observed all this but felt powerless to do anything that could save the situation.

The school committees that were in place had been inherited from DEC's but were non-functional because of lack of terms of reference. This closed the channel of communication and participation for the communities in the schools' affairs. The effect of the change was frustration and withdrawal from participation. Even where an opportunity for participation availed itself as observed at Liwonde CDSS, communities kept their distance. Communities might have interpreted this as exploitation through participation.

This study has acknowledged the role of community participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi through DEC's and that CDSSs are the largest provider of secondary education in the country. There are important lessons that could be learned from the mistakes made in the introduction and implementation of CDSS policy. One of the crucial lessons is that if community participation is required, thorough consultations should be made with all stakeholders and time should be invested in explaining the innovation

to communities using the most appropriate channels and also taking into consideration the best practices in implementing projects where community participation is required. A deliberate effort must be made to achieve genuine community participation. Genuine participation responds to the needs of the people and involves them in decision-making.

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APPENDIX 1A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS AT HEADQUARTERS, DIVISION AND DISTRICT OFFICES

1. What is the Ministry of Education's concept of a community day secondary school?
2. How were DEC's established?
3. What led to the Ministry's decision to convert all DEC's to CDSS?
4. Was the public involved in this decision? How or why not?
5. What effects on enrolment did this decision have on secondary education?
6. What happened to those who could not get into the CDSSs? (Check for responses on the proliferation of Night Secondary Schools and private schools)
7. Apart from effects on enrolment, what other effects were observed?
8. What is the status of CDSSs in relation to conventional secondary schools before their conversion and after their conversion to CDSSs? (Check on issues of quality in teaching and learning)
9. How would you assess the involvement of the communities in the schools before and after their conversion to CDSSs?
10. What was the public's immediate reaction to the decision to change the status of DEC's to CDSSs?
11. Did the public's view change with time?

APPENDIX 1 B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY KEY INFORMANTS (HEADS OF SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS, CHIEFS/VILLAGE HEADS AND PARENTS) AND FOCUS GROUPS.

1. What is your understanding of a community day secondary school?
2. How did this school start as a DEC?
3. What part did the community play in its establishment?
4. What part did the community play in its running?
5. What part did the government take in its establishment and running?
6. How did the school change from a DEC to a CDSS?
7. How did you feel about this change?
8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of DEC over a CDSS?
9. In which set up is community participation in the affairs of the school more – as a DEC or CDSS?
10. Do you have any other issues you would like to tell me about this school which I have not asked you about?

APPENDIX 1C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MCDE STAFF

1. What is your understanding of a community day secondary school?
2. How were DEC's created/established?
3. What was the role of MCDE Headquarters in the establishment of DEC's?
4. What role did MCDE play in the decision to convert DEC's to CDSS? (Check for MCDE's involvement in the decision and their reaction to it if they were not involved).
5. What effect did this decision have on the activities of MCDE?
6. How did the general public react to this decision?
7. How did your students react to this decision?
8. How did your potential students react to this decision?

APPENDIX 1D

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

1. W hat is your understanding of a community day secondary school?
2. W hat do you know about the establishment of this school?
3. H ow did it change to a community day secondary school?
4. H ow did you feel when you were selected to this community school?
5. W hat advantages are there in being selected to a community day school?
6. Ar e there any disadvantages that you experience or perceive in being at a community day secondary school when you compare with the experiences/perceptions of those at conventional secondary school?
7. W hat part do your parents/guardians take in the running of the school?
8. W hat part do you play in running the school?
9. D o you have any other issues you would like to tell me about your school which I have not asked about?

APPENDIX 2

VERBAL CONSENT – ENGLISH VERSION

My name is and my colleague here is I work at Chancellor College in Zomba. We are carrying out a research on popular participation in the provision of secondary education in Malawi. In doing this, we wish to find out what you know about the community day secondary school in your area and what role the community played in its establishment as a DEC and its running to the present.

This study is being done in Zomba, Machinga, Balaka, and Mangochi districts. Permission to do this study has been obtained from both the Education Headquarters and South Eastern Education Division.

You have been selected as one/some of the people who can give us some information on this school. We would like you to participate in this study. You are not forced to participate if you do not feel like doing so and your decision not to participate will not affect your life or welfare in any way.

I wish to assure you that everything that we discuss or what you say on this issue will be treated as confidential. As we shall be discussing, my colleague will be taking notes and also recording what we say using this small machine {Show it to the participant(s)}. The purpose of doing that is to keep a proper record of what we discuss. If for any reason you do not want us to use the tape recorder, we will respect your wishes and not use it.

Do you have any question on what I have said? Yes/No

Are you willing to participate in the discussion? Yes/No

Do you allow us to use the tape recorder? Yes/No

Signature of the Interviewer:

Date:

APPENDIX 3

SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY: THE SECONDARY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

What is a school committee?

A school committee is a group of people appointed to assist the Ministry of Education in the smooth running of a school. Ideally, every school should have a school committee.

Office Bearers of the School Committee

The Committee appoints annually from their own number, a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. Sometimes the Office of the secretary and treasurer may be combined if the committee so decides.

Tenure of Office

Tenure of office refers to the period of time when members have to be in the office.

- The members of the committee nominated by the proprietor of Local Education Authority (LEA) hold office for a period of two years.
- The four members who are parents of pupils attending the school hold office for one year.
- The co-opted members hold office for two years.

The school committee dissolves after two years.

Functions of a School Committee

- Maintains school buildings and provide adequate school furniture
- Observe regular attendance and punctuality of both teachers and pupils
- Recommends remission of school fees to the DESTITUTE (needy) children in the school
- Encourage parents to pay school fees in time
- Control school funds (Development Funds)
- Should be satisfied with implementation reports by inspection officers
- Initiates self-help projects with the help of local party leaders and village headmen
- Consider and advise the proprietor whether the conduct of the school is generally in accordance with the wishes of the parents or not

Rules to be observed by the Members

Members of the School Committee should observe the following rules:

- The meeting of the committee must be held in private. Provided with approval of the Chairman any person may be invited to the meeting for the purpose of advising it.
- Neither the Head Teacher nor any members of staff shall at any time be a member of the committee.
- The Head Teacher may attend the school committee matters relating to the conduct of the school for discussion.
- The meetings of the committee should be held at least three times a year. The meetings can also be called at such other times as the Chairperson may determine provided that any three members of the committee may at any time request the Chairperson to CONVENE (call) a meeting which must take place within two weeks of the date to request.
- The agenda of each meeting should be sent to the members at least one week before the date of the meeting.
- The Secretary is required to keep proper minutes of the proceedings of the meeting. Minutes of the previous meeting should be read to the committee at the beginning of each meeting.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES ON FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES

1. Observe the attendance and punctuality of teachers and pupils and advise the proprietor on the times at which the school session shall begin and end on any day
2. Advise the proprietor on the appointment, supervision and dismissal of any non-teaching staff
3. Advise the proprietor on the appointment to and resignation or dismissal from the school staff of teachers
4. Satisfy themselves as to the maintenance of the school fabric and the provision of furniture and equipment to the scale approved by the competent authority
5. Satisfy themselves as to the implementation of report by inspecting officers so far as such reports relate to matters mentioned elsewhere in this subsection.
6. Advise the proprietor on the provision of religious instruction to an agreed syllabus which in the case of schools established by religious body shall be in accordance with the tradition of the foundation
7. Satisfy themselves as to the proper payments of salaries of teachers
8. Consider and advise the proprietor whether the conduct of the school is generally in accordance with the wishes of the parents
9. Advise the proprietor on the admission or refusal of admission of pupils

APPENDIX 4

MINISTRY CIRCULAR ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Ref. No. DP2/31/11/2
1999

12th January,

To : ALL EDUCATION DIVISIONAL MANAGERS
: ALL DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS
: HEADS OF ALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS
: THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MANEB
: THE PRINCIPAL, MCDE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CULTURE: ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

The Ministry has over the past year reviewed the situation affecting Distance Education Centres (DECs). Following that review, it has been decided that major policy changes are necessary in order to ensure that the youth of this country are provided with a more equitable and improved quality secondary education.

The basis of the policy change is the recognition of the fact that the DECs are in reality no longer centres of distance education. No distance education takes place in them any more. In practice the centres are ordinary secondary schools working with limited facilities which are often also of very poor quality. The ultimate wish of the government is to create a unified secondary education system in which equal access to quality education can be guaranteed.

Below are the main points of the new policy.

1. All Distance Education Centres (DECs) will from now onwards be called Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs).
2. The Heads of the CDSSs, like the Heads of other Government and Government Aided Secondary schools, will report to Ministry Headquarters through their respective Educational Division Managers. They will **NO LONGER** report to MCDE.
3. The Ministry will begin the process of deploying diploma and graduate teachers to the CDSSs. As a start, this year (1999) the

Ministry will post diploma and graduate head teachers to a selected 112 CDSSs. (The list of these CDSSs is attached).

4. In future the CDSSs that are in close proximity to an existing conventional secondary school may be merged with the conventional secondary school to form one school.
5. As implied by their name, Community Day Secondary Schools will be day schools. Any existing boarding facilities will be phased out. In connection with this no new boarding students can be admitted into the CDSSs in forms 2, 3 and 4.
6. In pursuance of (5) above Form One and all new pupils to the CDSSs will be drawn from primary schools within the local catchment area of the CDSS. This catchment area will not exceed 10 Kilometres.
7. This year Form One pupils to the 112 CDSSs will be selected by the ministry headquarters using their catchment areas as described in (6) above. Enrolment of Form One pupils to the rest of the CDSSs will be done by the head teachers in close liaison with their respective District Education Offices and the local community leaders. However, even in this case, pupils will be drawn only from the local catchment area as described in (6) above. In addition the number of Form one pupils shall not exceed 50 per classroom.
8. Community Day Secondary Schools operating in borrowed premises will be given a maximum of three years to construct their own premises or else they will be phased out.
9. The local communities, through school committees, will continue playing a major role in the affairs of the schools including development, management and pupil and teacher discipline. Guidelines for the role of the school committees in CDSSs will be provided by the Ministry
10. Pupils in Community Day Secondary Schools will pay the same tuition fees as those in other Government secondary schools. However, School Committees in these schools may charge other appropriate fees after receiving approval from the Ministry.
11. The establishment of new CDSSs will be approved by the Ministry Headquarters through the Educational Divisional offices. The permission to open a CDSS will be granted only after the standards set by the ministry are strictly followed. Details of these standards can be obtained from the Ministry's, Divisional and District Offices.

12. Squatting within the premises of the school will not be permitted.

Sam D. Dumba Safuli (PhD)

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CULTURE