



**THE POLITICS OF POLICY PROCESSES: UNDERSTANDING ACTORS
PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY IN MALAWI**

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT THESIS

BY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work. Where the work of other people has been used, acknowledgements have been duly made. I also declare that it has not been submitted for any degree in any other university. All errors herein are my own.

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DEDICATION

To my late dad, **Daniel Lightwell Manda**, although you never got to see this, you are my inspiration in every way. The legacy lives on.

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ABSTRACT

Policy development is a complex process. It is characterised by different actors that compete for government attention on an issue. Since energy problems present a major barrier to development, many countries have adopted comprehensive policy frameworks to support renewable energy. This study aimed at understanding how politics of policy processes affect the promotion of renewable energy development in Malawi. To understand what is happening the study embraced a political economy approach to explain the role that various actors and institutional contexts play in policy processes. This helped to comprehensively explain the policy actors' narratives, their strategies, the resources they use for political turf competition, and the extent to which institutions reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy development in Malawi. Using qualitative methods of data collection, specifically key informant interviews with officials from organizations in the renewable energy sector, that is, The Department of Energy Affairs (DoEA), Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA) , Power Market Limited (PML), Renewable Energy Industries Association of Malawi (REIAMA), Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM), Energy Generation Company (EGENCO), JCM Power, and Cedar Energy Limited, the study found that policy narratives affect the content and policy alternatives available to policymakers. It was also established by this study that agenda setting is not a rational process but a struggle over the definition of the problem as all interests are not equally represented and some issues are more likely to reach the formal agenda than others. The study also found that there is competition for political turf and that policy actors use different resources to gain advantage over opposing groups or interests. Lastly, the study observed that energy systems are locked-in a path dependent process and for renewable energy to develop Malawi has done an energy sector reform to level the playing field for new entrants in energy production.

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LIST OF ACCRONYMS

MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MREAP	Malawi Renewable Energy Acceleration Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi
EGENCO	Electricity Generation Company (Malawi) Limited
MERA	Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority
IPP	Independent Power Producer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
WHO	World Health Organization
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
DoEA	Department of Energy Affairs
REIAMA	Renewable Energy Industries Association of Malawi

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Policymaking is a dynamic process involving the interplay of several factors. Fundamental to any policy process are the roles of the actors involved as they influence the policy process through their knowledge, experience, beliefs and power (Mwisongo et al., 2016). While societies are plagued by various problems worth government attention, it is recorded by Greenstone (2014) that much of the population in developing countries remain without reliable access to electricity and the benefits generated from it. On this note, several governments, Malawi inclusive, have emphasized the crucial role of electricity for human development, and have, therefore put electrification as a development priority (GoM, 2018). Since energy plays an important role in the lives of humans and in the activities of the economy, there seems to be a positive relationship between energy consumption and economic growth (see Mukhtarov et al., 2017; Esen & Bayrak, 2017; Khan et al., 2020). Indeed, IRENA (2021) emphasize that considering energy as a key ingredient of development and an essential input for achieving most Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) means that there is an ever-increasing demand for energy to drive industrialization and provision of basic services, for example, health care and safe drinking water. In this regard, it is worth highlighting that in the incumbent energy system most of the electricity generated globally comes from fossil fuel-based power plants (Kabeyi & Olanrewaju, 2002). However, these energy resources are generally expensive, scarce, exhaustible, polluting and insecure since not all countries are endowed with such resources, hence a source of energy insecurity. Additionally, the combustion of fossil fuels produces greenhouse gases, which are the main cause of global warming, thus, threatening the very existence of humanity and mother nature (Sathaye et al., 2011; Kabeyi & Olanrewaju, 2002; Holden et al., 2017). Consequently, these challenges have attracted much attention to renewable energy sources and other low carbon cheap sources of energy for power generation (Kabeyi & Olanrewaju, 2002).

Furthermore, drawing from Burke and Stephens (2017), the development, application and proliferation of renewable energy is not only brought to the fore because of the worries about imminent fossil fuel scarcity and the urgency of climate change concerns, but also because the existing energy system is intentionally incongruent with present energy needs. Echoing this line of thought Libertson (2021), explains that the shift to renewable energy comes about because the incumbent energy systems structured around centralized large-scale power production are currently experiencing operational problems related to climate change, energy security, aging grid infrastructure and regional challenges, thus, lacking a goodness of fit with current energy needs and future energy challenges. To this end, a transition to renewable energy goes beyond technological change and emphasize on reconfiguring the energy system, that is, replacing monopolized energy systems with democratic renewable solutions (Burke, 2018). Surely, the decline of conventional energy sources and systems is among the most contested areas of policy and politics, and according to Marion et al. (2016), these moves have not been made without significant political negotiations and conflict within and beyond government.

Other scholars cite the need to shift to renewable energy sources because of energy access, energy security and energy justice concerns. For example, Adesola and Brennan (2019) argue that high population coupled with development initiatives taking place in Africa, have increased demand for energy. However, despite Africa having enough resources to satisfy its current and future demands, most countries in the continent have the lowest access to electricity, with many countries still relying heavily on traditional fuels (Hafner, 2018). This is deleterious both to the environment and to the users. In this regard, renewable energy sources may improve and widen energy access and in effect preventing a scenario in which growing demand is met with traditional fuel sources (see Holden et al., 2021; Mohan & Topp, 2018; Sathaye et al., 2011). Despite different reasons to shift to renewable energy, it has to be noted that the transition pathway is characterized by a significant presence of actors such as influential individuals, key ministries, industry groups, unions, voters, *et cetera*, that have different objectives as well as different means for influencing policymaking (Jakob et al., 2019).

In Malawi, as is the case in most countries within Sub-Saharan Africa, people face severe energy poverty with supply lagging behind demand (IRENA, 2021). In this context, committing to the low-carbon pathway is not simply a matter of replacing polluting electricity sources with renewables, but rather creating new power systems that will improve and widen power supply, enhance long-term access and utility in energy production, decrease dependence on fossil fuel, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Kabeyi & Olanrewaju, 2002). Accordingly, this implies a prominent role for policy and policymakers as the current configurations of energy flows have deep historical roots (Laurentis & Pearson, 2021). This history and associated path dependence mean that efforts toward a transition to renewable energy need to start from a clear appreciation of these particularities. Furthermore, there is need to understand which changes are happening and why, who might be affected and what can be done in response. Indeed, Pedersen et al. (2021) explain that to understand energy transitions it is important to look at policy actors' interests, ideas, beliefs and power, and the diverse complex interplay of these factors. Indeed, according to Jakob et al. (2019) understanding a transition to renewable energy requires paying attention to politics as policies that are implemented must best meet the objectives of policy actors that have the greatest influence on policy decisions.

Against a background of unstable and unreliable electricity supply, low generation capacity, low efficiency, inadequate investment, and high production costs in developing countries (Dagnachew et al., 2020), tailored policies are needed to support the development of renewable energy to accelerate the pace of energy access. However, Pedersen et al. (2021) underline that the dominant approaches to energy transitions have largely been developed based on European experience and therefore provide a limited understanding of such developments in African countries. Furthermore, much energy research even in African countries has been carried out from a socio-technical perspective with a focus on how the development of new technologies could drive a transition to cleaner energy (Taulo et al., 2015). Consequently, issues related to politics and power have received less attention. To this end more empirical research is needed to address the lacunae in the literature of renewable energy transitions particularly in countries like Malawi.

This study contributes toward the acknowledgement of the growing importance of the politics of policy processes by investigating the political economy of renewable

energy development in Malawi. The study engages directly with growing literature that is closely attuned to understanding the socio-political processes, political-economic contests and institutional quality characteristics of energy transitions. Recognizing contributions from socio-technical perspectives towards renewable energy transitions, this study goes a step further to argue that an understanding of policy actors' interests, ideas, narratives, resources, strategies at their disposal and also the institutions through which they operate may promote or prevent policies favorable to renewable energy and energy transition. Focusing on the agenda setting stage of renewable energy policy in Malawi, this study does so by getting insights on how renewable energy narratives, strategies that policy actors use, policy actors' resources, and institutions shape and influence renewable energy development.

1.2 Introduction

Public policy is used to address problems and issues that are of public concern. Kingdon (2014) says, though a drastic oversimplification, public policy making can be considered to be a set of processes including at least (1) the setting of the agenda, (2) the specification of alternatives from which a choice is to be made, (3) an authoritative choice among those specified alternatives, and (4) the implementation of the decision. Just as problems beget action, it is important to recognize that public policy is just as much as what government decides to do as it is what government decides not to do (Dye, 2014). Ultimately, public policy is all about choices. However defined, policymaking is burdened with a level of complexity that can be daunting. Howlett et al. (2009) explain that there are intricate series of smaller processes within the policy process. Public policy is not a single actor's brainchild. Markedly, the fundamental observation about policy is that decisions are not made by a single person. Indeed, on this note, Howlett and Mukherjee (2017) explain that public policies are determined by governments but involve other actors and institutions, often in complex governance and governing arrangements and relationships.

Dye (2014) also explains that there are a great deal of people and organizations who are involved in public policy issues. These actors have various interests, perceptions, and preferences that can and do have tremendous effects on the creation and implementation of public policy. Chinsinga (2007a) explaining policy processes in a

democracy also highlights that one of the underlying assumptions in a democratic system of governance is that it is an open process involving a wide range of actors and stakeholders, and that these stakeholders have considerable impact not only on the policy process but also on the final policy outcome. In this context, Garret and Islam (1998) underline that it is worth noting that policies and programs are the cumulative result of conflict and cooperation among many government actors, principally politicians and bureaucrats, as well as members of various interest groups. While policy actors may vary within contexts and policy issues, in Malawi, the Executive, the government bureaucracy and donors dominate the policymaking process, especially in setting the tone of public discourse and overall policy agenda (Chinsinga, 2007a). Other policy actors include the Parliament (specifically parliamentary committees), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the media (ibid).

Over and above the actors in policy processes, the institutional framework for public policymaking is equally important. Heyi (2020) explains that institutions determine who are the key actors, the payoff to the actors, the deliberations in which they interact and the level of interaction. In this sense, it can therefore be said that besides policy actors who see different faces of an issue, institutions process information in ways that limit what will be addressed at any given time (Garret & Islam, 1998). It is also argued that external forces such as public opinion affect public policies as these coalesce with policy incentives to quickly shift attention on policy issues (ibid). Musing over this, it can be hardly said that policy decisions reflect the unencumbered will of policy makers so much as that will interacts with the constraints generated by actors, structures and ideas present at a given political and social conjuncture (Howlett et al., 2009). There are socio-political processes in each successive stage in the policy cycle. It is also important to elucidate that policy actors' interests, ideas, resources and even their institutions epitomize power. In this sense, some issues may reach the governmental agenda while others may not as the powerful may influence what issues are categorized as public problems (Koduah et al., 2015; Heyi, 2020). Surely, policymaking is not a neutral objective or a technical process, it is a political activity thoroughly immersed in questions about who gets what, when and how in society (Howlett & Mukherjee, 2017; Heywood, 2004). In light of this, it was imperative for this study to identify and understand actors promoting renewable energy in Malawi and ascertain their influence in the energy sector.

Energy holds a special place in the category of problems as its role is crucial in fueling economic growth. According to Karekezi et al. (2012), people who lack access to cleaner and affordable energy are often trapped in a reinforcing vicious cycle of deprivation, lower incomes and the means to improve their living conditions while at the same time using significant amounts of their limited income on expensive and unhealthy forms of energy that provide poor and/or unsafe services. Against a background of energy being a key to development, a foundation for industrialization and an essential input for achieving most Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), it is argued that most people in Africa face severe energy poverty (IRENA, 2021). Indeed, many African countries suffer from insufficient electricity generation capacity, often coupled with inadequate, poorly maintained transmission and distribution networks, which often result in an unreliable (and often very expensive) electricity supply, which impedes critical social and economic activities (Dagnachew et al, 2020).

On a related note, Adesola and Brennan (2019) argue that high population growth coupled with development initiatives taking place in Africa, have increased the demand for energy. However, despite Africa having enough resources to satisfy its current and future demands, most countries in the continent have the lowest access to electricity, with many countries still relying heavily on traditional fuels (Hafner et al., 2018). For example, in Malawi, 97 percent of energy comes from biomass in the form of fuel wood, charcoal and agricultural and industrial wastes. The inefficient combustion of traditional sources of energy adds significantly to global warming and they have substantial adverse effects on health and productivity (see Ganda & Ngakwe, 2014; Taalo et al., 2015; IRENA 2021). Taalo et al., (2015) also record that there is a widening gap between supply and demand which is being exacerbated by urbanization, population growth and rural electrification among others. Thus, the existing system is greatly strained and the frequency of blackouts and brownouts is increasing, constraining industrial production and provision of socio-economic services as well as deterring foreign investments.

Williams and Williams (2014) explain that as concerns about climate change escalate, and the need for caution over management of natural resources and energy security becomes more evident, it is increasingly apparent that renewable energy holds a great promise for meeting the energy needs. Venturing into renewable energy seems to be a

“win-win” strategy that could simultaneously benefit the economy, the environment and the human well-being. Against this backdrop, Prasad et al. (2007) explain that though Africa is endowed with substantial renewable energy resources, there is growing consensus that efforts to disseminate renewable sources in Africa have fallen short of expectations.

Against this background, Prasad et al. (2007) also suggest that if properly harnessed, renewables could meet a significant portion of the energy demand, and also provide important hedge to current risks that plague the conventional energy sector, namely, high and fluctuating oil prices and droughts that affect hydropower. However, to realize these benefits tailored policies are needed to support the development of renewable energy to accelerate the pace of energy access (IRENA et al., 2018). Furthermore, Adams and Asante (2019) explain that even though it is widely acknowledged that the barriers to energy transition are primarily political, the literature that drive, constrain, and shape renewable energy policy particularly in developing countries is rudimentary and wanting. In this light, this research examined the political economy of renewable energy policy processes in Malawi. The argument is that against a backdrop of vast energy sources, supply of electricity and other modern forms of energy lags behind demand. It is therefore important to interrogate interests, narratives and networks of policy actors to unearth opportunities and challenges for the development of this sector.

1.3 Problem Statement

Energy is a key component of development. It is shown that the use of energy is strongly related to other aspects of development. Llyod (2017) explains that wealth, health, nutrition, water, infrastructure, education, and even life expectancy are strongly and significantly related to the consumption of energy per capita. In Malawi, lack of reliable energy supply is one of the common problems. Over the decades, availability of electricity has been one of the biggest challenges the country is facing. Persistent blackouts are the order of the day and this is hindering economic development of the country. A report by Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) (2011) indicates that some of the challenges the Malawi power sector is facing are due to lack of generation, transmission and distribution capacity relative to demand;

need for regulatory and institutional reform; poor power quality and reliability of electricity service to customers; a financially constrained utility; lack of modern electricity for a large segment of the population; and lack of enabling environment to attract private investors in the sector.

Apart from the report by MCC (2011), it is also recorded that in Malawi, as is the case in other Sub-Saharan African countries, lack of electricity supply drives most of the population especially in the rural areas to use wood and other biomass resources for heating, cooking and lighting. This result in various negative impacts such as hard physical labor, deforestation or indoor air pollution affecting the environment as well as the living conditions of the users. On this note, Taalo et al. (2015) also explain that the burden of gathering traditional supply of fuel has a gender concern because it draws women and children away from other activities like education and farming that could eventually have improved their productivity and living conditions. Furthermore, carrying heavy loads over long periods of time causes cumulative health problems. Over and above these issues, inefficient production and unsustainable use of biomass energy contributes to environmental degradation, leading to high soil sediments in rivers and lakes. Gamula et al. (2013) record that in recent years due to restricted water flows, the country's power production capacity (which is mainly hydro) has reduced.

Considering the unparalleled potential for renewable energy, it is explained by Beck and Martinot (2004) that fundamental challenges of energy access, energy security and climate change can be addressed. On this account, tailored policies are needed to support the deployment of renewables to accelerate the pace of energy access. However, it has to be highlighted that the formation of public policy centers on decision-making by the political leadership in government, and that these decisions are shaped by a multitude of different actors. Indeed, according to Bali and Halpin (2021) in policymaking there are fundamental political and ideological disagreements about which problems come to constitute public issues, and are thus subject to government attention. In other words, in and around policymaking there are conflicts about how serious the underlying problems are, who will be affected, how much such policy issues may cost (and for whom), whether the policy(ies) will work as intended,

and on whether the problems they are designed to address are really problems at all (Baumgartner et al., 2006).

In general, policy actors develop, drive and mold policies; they also influence policy outcomes (Cobb et al., 1976; Howlett et al., 2009; Anyebe, 2018). Notwithstanding, Chinsinga (2007a) explains that in Malawi it may be difficult to identify the main actors that are involved in various stages of the policy process. In this regard, it is imperative to turn to political system's rules, norms and procedures to understand the nature and pattern of policymaking. Considerably, Malawi's energy policy is determined by a number of key policy documents representing wider areas of the 'enabling environment' that links energy policy into the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). Taalo et al (2015) explain that this stresses how energy is an important factor towards achieving growth and development. Indeed, future economic growth depends on the long-term availability of energy from sources that are affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly (see also GoM, 2018). According to Frame et al. (2013), the energy sector in Malawi is broadly governed by the Environmental Management Act and the Energy Regulatory Act. The legal framework also consists of sector specific Acts. These include the Electricity Act, Rural Electrification Act, Forestry Act, Petroleum (Exploration and Production Act), Atomic Energy Act and the Liquid Fuels and Gas (Production and Supply) Act.

Adelaja (2020) elucidates that energy policies are game changers as they have shown to positively impact on renewable energy adoption and they may explain differentials in renewable energy deployment within countries in the same region. In addition, energy policies also attribute the lack of progress in renewable energy generation and infrastructure development in many developing countries (ibid). Since policies are the outputs of the political system and that different policy actors may have competing values, interests and ideas (Knill & Tosun, 2011; Howlett & Mukherjee, 2017), which policies become implemented will be determined by the complex interplay of these actors mediated by the political process. It is therefore imperative to study the politics of policy processes with the aim of understanding actors promoting renewable energy in Malawi as some barriers may exist which may be readily gleaned only from close observation of an actual policy adoption process.

Most studies about the politics of energy fall within the 1970s and the 1980s with prime focus on international political economy and oil geopolitics, and green industrial consistencies. It is acknowledged by (Pedersen et al., 2021; Bloem et al., 2021; Gielen et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2013) that the energy transition literature has largely centered on the technical, economic and sometimes socio-cultural changes, with the political dynamics receiving less attention. Pedersen et al. (2021) show that much energy transition research in Africa has been carried out from a socio-technical perspective with a focus on how the development of new technologies could drive a transition to renewable energy. However, this approach was initially developed based on European experiences and tended to assume common patterns across all regions. Consequently, issues related to politics and power have received less attention (see also Kabeyi & Olanrewaju, 2002; Tagotra, 2017). Akin to most countries in the subcontinent, in Malawi, although politics and power matter by way of an interrelationship between resource endowments and resistance from vested interests, still very little is analyzed and understood. For example, Taulo et al. (2015) studied the energy supply situation, options and issues associated with it. Frame et al. (2013) looked at advantages and challenges of an integrated approach to energy development through the Malawi Renewable Energy Acceleration Programme (MREAP). Other studies focused on the overview of the energy sector in Malawi, reforms in the Malawi power sector, and a PESTEL analysis for sustainable development of renewable energy (see Gamula et al., 2013; Kachaje et al., 2017; Zalengera et al., 2014). The literature on energy systems as key sites of political-economic contests is rudimentary and wanting. This gap motivated this study and it interrogated the politics of policy processes, with the aim of understanding actors promoting renewable energy in Malawi. Thus, the study highlighted the different actors involved, their values, interests, resources, narratives and networks, and how these influence the actors' impact on the political turf—encompassing the realm of potential choices or choices not made.

1.4 Justification of the Study

The provision of safe, clean, reliable and affordable forms of energy is a key to development. Electricity is not a luxury reserved only for rich countries, but an essential condition for fulfilling basic human needs and the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). Energy is central to any discussion of sustainable development—it is interrelated to economic, social and environmental attributes. Energy is clearly an important motor of macroeconomic growth, and conventional sources of energy are a major source of environmental stress at global as well as local levels. In terms of the social dimension, energy is the prerequisite for the fulfillment of many human basic needs and services, and inequities in energy provision and quality often manifest themselves as issues of social justice.

Concerns relating to low access to electricity continue to dominate the research landscape in Malawi (Tuaulo et al., 2015; Frame et al., 2013; Gamula et al., 2013). However, most of these studies concentrate on the technical, economical and policy aspects of energy transitions with the political dynamics receiving less attention. This means that there is a lacuna in the literature. This study therefore filled this research gap, unearthing political-economic contests that characterize policy processes in the renewable energy sector in Malawi. Furthermore, by filling that gap in the literature this study provided information that other scholars or researchers could use in their future studies to understand how problems and policy solutions come to be defined, by whom and with what effects.

Furthermore, the way in which political and economic processes interact is critical in promoting or frustrating the development of policies. The study also unearthed the politics of policy processes not only in the development of renewable energy in Malawi, but also in other policies as well. It highlighted the different interests, narratives, discourses, policy networks and even strategies for winning a political turf. In the process, the study showed that policymaking is more than the step-by-step process as it is often simply understood, rather there are political-economic contests that determine what is organized into politics and what is organized out. This study therefore has given both policymakers and practitioners inside and outside government more precise conceptual tools to understand the messy attributes of policies. Fundamentally, this might help them to understand the ‘micro’ politics of the contexts in which they work, and how to use that understanding to frame and implement policies and programs.

1.5 Main Objective

To understand how politics of policy processes affect the promotion of renewable energy development in Malawi

1.5.1 Specific Research Objectives

1. To analyze the narratives that suit actors' political interests at the agenda setting stage to promote renewable energy development in Malawi
2. To identify strategies that actors employ to get their narratives on the formal agenda of renewable energy policy in Malawi
3. To assess how policy actors' resources shape competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage of Malawi's renewable energy policy
4. To examine the extent to which institutions reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy development in Malawi

1.5.2 Main research question

How does the politics of policy processes affect the promotion of renewable energy development in Malawi?

1.5.3 Specific research questions

1. What are the narratives that suit actors' political interests at the agenda setting stage to promote renewable energy development in Malawi?
2. What strategies are employed by the actors to get their renewable energy ideas and interests on the formal agenda of renewable energy policy in Malawi?
3. How do actors' resources shape competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage of Malawi's renewable energy policy?
4. To what extent do institutions reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy development in Malawi?

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

1.6.1 Scope of the Study

Since the political definition of a public problem results from a symbolic battle taking place between rival groups in an at least established institutional context, the dimensions of political agenda setting in respect of a situation judged collectively as problematic, are however, complex and worthy of particular attention. Therefore, it was the scope of this study to understand the politics of policy processes at the agenda setting stage with respect to renewable energy development in Malawi.

The Government of Malawi has the Ministry of Energy, Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) and Electricity Generation Company Malawi Limited (EGENCO) that work hand in hand, in making sure that the energy needs of the Malawian population are met. The research targeted the Ministry as well as ESCOM's and EGENCO's top employees, Power Market Limited, Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA) and people outside government—Independent Power Producers (IPPs), consultants and other important people in energy. These actors were chosen to tap into the entire policy communities, not just part of it.

1.6.2 Limitations

The study concerned the politics of policy processes at the agenda setting stage of policymaking. Therefore, it was not the purpose of this study to highlight intricate series of smaller processes that may be found in other successive stages within the policy cycle. Since the study required to access respondents inside and outside government, the amount of time taken to access all of them affected this study. Where the respondents were not accessed the sample size and the scope of analysis was limited, affecting the trend, generalizations or significant relationships that might be found among actors.

1.7 Conclusion

The chapter has presented the problem concerning the politics of policy processes in the energy sector in Malawi. It has highlighted that the literature on political-economic contests is thus far rudimentary and wanting, that is, meriting a study in this

area in order to understand actors that promote renewable energy development in Malawi. The chapter has also presented the main objective of the study which is to understand how the politics of policy processes affect the promotion of renewable energy development in Malawi. Lastly, the chapter has also justified the worthiness of conducting this study, and it has highlighted the scope as well as the limitations therein.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed and focused on the already existing literature relevant to the overall and specific objectives of the study. The literature presented in this section was both theoretical and empirical. The chapter also included the conceptual and theoretical framework.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 The Policy and Political Context in Malawi: Key Socio-political Developments in Malawi and their Effects on Policy Processes

Public policymaking cannot be adequately studied and understood without considering its environment or context. Indeed, Chinsinga (2007a), argues that this is the case because the context both limits and directs what policymakers as well as the public at large can or cannot effectively do. Among the elements that may affect public policymaking within a society, it is argued that the economy of that society is especially an important factor (Stiglitz & Rosengard, 2015). Surely, since public policy or say politics in general is essentially about allocating resources to competing issues and demands, how government sets its priorities is sometimes determined by the resources that the government has at its disposal. Indeed, lower economic levels mean lower budgetary resources, often exacerbated by lower tax effort. On this note, Chinsinga (2007a) argues that in developing countries like Malawi, enormous amounts of domestic and foreign debts may leave inadequate resources for policymaking as huge part of such a country's resources are directed toward servicing these debts. To this end, countries in this position usually depend on donors for a fair share of the resources that they use in the policymaking process. In fact, according to Booth et al. (2006), a country's excessive dependence on donors for financial assistance in this area means that donors have too much influence on policies in that country. On a related note, lack of financial resources for policymaking in these countries may lead to accepting policy packages that are not in line with the socio-

economic aspirations of the recipient country. For example, Dulani (2006) highlights that the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in Malawi, had a lukewarm reception at best, with evidence suggesting that the main motivation for signing up to SAPs being access to loans from the World Bank, IMF and other lender institutions rather than a genuine commitment for reforms. Hudson and Leftwich (2014) also highlight that in many circumstances aid conditionalities have been highly controversial for both practical political and ideological reasons. Thus, maintaining eligibility of these resources often constrains the policy choices that government leaders would otherwise prefer, whether or not good for the country (Hudson & Leftwich., 2014; Booth et al., 2006).

Another important consequence of limited budget resource in a country like Malawi is that government personnel are often underpaid in relation to what they would consider to be sufficient for an appropriate lifestyle. In this regard, the temptations to engage in corruption, and to rationalize it as necessary and therefore appropriate, are correspondingly high (Anders, 2002; Hussein, 2010). Consequently, this undermines the fair application of regulations and fair service provision, as personnel in frontline roles such as inspecting, policing and teaching try to exact greater compensation in their roles. This may explain why Chinsinga (2007a) highlighted that this might be the reason why issues of corruption receive sustained affection that are largely influenced by donor agencies and multilateral financial and development institutions, thus, making corruption a matter of national importance.

In Malawi, lack of resources may also explain why enactment of some functions are hampered. Ascher (2017) underscores that aside from corruption, the certainty that enforcement of regulations will be carried out as expected is undermined when the enforcement personnel are spread thinly. For example, over the years there has been an outcry that some social services (for example, education, health and safe water) are being underprovided in most developing countries, Malawi inclusive. Consequently, thinking about public services has reflected the way the public policy pendulum has swung in recent decades. For instance, Kayuni (2010) highlights that in an effort to improve service delivery according to new management principles has seen the government committing to public private partnerships (PPPs). The rationale here is that the contractual agreement formed between a public institution and a private

sector entity will allow for greater private sector participation in the provision of public services, in the end improving service delivery. Furthermore, poor service delivery has led developing countries to commit themselves to international policies. In this context, the driving force of the SDGs has influenced the focus not only of policy but also of research on some core services, particularly urban water supply, sanitation, primary education and health. This usually leads to substantial increase in aid spending by the rich countries, improving economic growth in impoverished regions. It is argued by Batley et al. (2012) that some of that growth may be translated into tax income available to be spent on public services. In some circumstances, international agencies have preferred to bypass national or local government structures, thus, setting up non-state structures to deliver their programs (see Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2011).

Lower economic resources also typically mean less resources in the analytical functions of the policy process in that fewer resources are available to train planners and other policy experts, or to gather and maintain relevant information. Chinsinga (2007b) argues that in Malawi, the government bureaucracy lack expertise in policy processes invariably creating a favorable atmosphere for donors involved to dominate the policy processes in various ways. These knowledge gaps, combined with greater socio-political volatility in most developing countries, increases the importance of building adaptation into policymaking. However elucidated, Ascher (2017) argues that while greater policy adaptability is required, the same also implies uncertainty about what policies will be in place overtime. Consequently, this may lead to frequent changes in policies and it may become difficult to isolate the consequences of a particular policy from the impacts of prior policies. These outcomes may create frustrations which may erode the credibility of governments, both in terms of faith that policy initiatives will be successful, and in confidence that political leaders are sincere in the initiatives that they pursue.

Chinsinga (2007a) argues that in as much as economic conditions may be critical in determining the landscape of policymaking in a country, equally important is a country's institutional framework for public policymaking. The logic here is that the rules, norms and procedures as laid out by the political system are particularly important in identifying the critical clusters of actors or stakeholders in the

polycymaking process. It is explained by (Ascher, 2017) that the fact that some segment of the population in developing countries like Malawi, are farmers, rural populations in general, small shop owners and casual laborers in cities, often vindicate lack of resources to organize on a sustainable basis, the density and the breadth of interest groups. Therefore, effective interaction with policymakers is more likely to be skewed. Indeed, in this regard, Chinsinga (2007a) highlighted that the civil society organizations that are present are often elitist in nature and urban based, meaning that they only speak for a minority of the population and on matters that directly affect domains of their interests. Furthermore, in so far as most of the country's population is rural and agricultural based, this may make it more difficult to reach them with policies or to monitor their behavior and the fates of projects and programs.

Since the 1990s, the discourse about polycymaking in Africa shifted from state-centered bureaucratic and elite approaches to good governance—with its tenets emphasizing on citizen participation in policy decisions (Kpessa, 2011). Certainly, in Malawi, the advent of decentralization in 1998 meant that spaces for public participation even at the grassroots level were open. In this regard, decentralization was heralded as the best way to tap into the knowledge and energy of society in the core activities of the state. In other words, decentralization aimed at incorporating the views and preferences of the public directly into policy processes in ways that treat all citizens as equals. Thus, building confidence in a democratic system and legitimizing final policy choices by imbining in citizen's sense of ownership of policy outcomes (Cohen & Sabel, 1997; Chinsinga 2008). However, it is argued that in practice, decentralization in Malawi has been plagued by inconsistent and *ad hoc* implementation motivated largely by political considerations. For example, Kayuni and Tambulasi (2011) pointed that there was lack of commitment by the national level politicians to implement decentralization, fearing that doing so would greatly undermine their often precarious hold on power. Furthermore, there is pervasive tension and conflict among key political actors at the local levels, namely councilors, chiefs and Members of Parliament (MPs) and this may in effect reduce room for effective participation of the local population in matters that affect them at that level. Again, drawing from Kayuni and Tambulasi (2011) one can learn that councils largely depend on central government and donors for their own survival and this puts

into question the independence of councils (see also Chiweza, 2007). It is also recorded by Kayuni and Tambulasi (2011) that for a decade the government was not willing to hold local government elections as this would have undermined the ruling party's legitimacy at the local level. It is evident that with this chaos, forms of direct citizen participation can hardly be achieved as the institutional design of policymaking spaces has a significant impact on who participates.

Apart from the chaos in decentralization reforms in the Malawian set up, Chinsinga (2007a) also explain that rural people are not an attentive public despite being the majority of the population. In other words, they are less informed and less interested in public issues, so it is the minority that make important government decisions. Surely, in his explanations Chinsinga (2007a) highlighted that rural people might be disadvantaged in the way they access relevant policy information as newspapers are relatively expensive and predominantly in English, so they are read almost exclusively in urban areas. Further to that, the radio stations and/or the television stations that these people listen to and watch are publicly owned since it is the public broadcasters that have nationwide coverage. To this end, rural people listen to and watch what the government would like them to hear and see. Notwithstanding, it has to be appreciated that the case might be different in recent times. Malawi as a developing country has undergone several reforms in public policymaking. One breakthrough is the practice of multiparty democracy which has changed the face of policymaking—giving freedom to the media to influence political processes.

Booth et al. (2006) explain that the autocratic regime that existed from 1964 to 1994 had long lasting effects in terms of policymaking in the country. In their explanation, the authors highlighted that Malawi is a striking case of a '*big man syndrome*' both under the autocratic and democratic regimes. Both periods are characterized with a systematic failure to distinguish between private sector resources, state resources and the resources of the ruling party. The distribution of spoils in the Malawian political space are a characteristic way of building and sustaining political loyalties. This may mean that political leaders draw policy suggestions from those that are labeled loyalist, thus, leaving other stakeholders out of policy discussions. This may eventually affect the quality of policy outcomes as the accumulation of spoils increasingly assumes illegal forms and patronage progressively drives policy to a

large extent. According to (Doddy & Sujarwoto, 2017) presidential patronage has been effective in buying off parliamentarians, leaving political parties as just weakly institutionalized political groupings of followers of particular personalities. In this regard, the role of parliament is merely to approve and legitimize the President's policies perhaps with some input from the bureaucracy (Chinsinga, 2007a). In this regard, Parliament ratifies policy proposals tabled by the President without attempting at all to alter the content thereof, and this jeopardizes democracy as the public through their representatives cannot scrutinize decisions or the dynamic of bargaining.

It is also explained by Chinsinga (2007a), that at some point most of the Parliamentary Committees were non-functional. The non-functionality was attributed to funding though there was evidence that funds allocated to committees were routinely diverted for other purposes. However highlighted, the situation has changed since donors have come in to support some of the committees. The problem however is that the activities of these committees can hardly go beyond donor's interests since they are almost donor dependent, both financially and technically (Chinsinga, 2007a). In this regard, the argument remains that policy is seen to be dominated and driven by donors.

2.2.2 Understanding Politics of Policy Processes

The argument policy creates politics has led to the understanding that public policy emerges from a process of disputes in different decision arenas (Almeida & Gomes, 2018). One of the greatest themes of scholars in studying the policy process, is the investigation of the engagement and influence of certain actors and political groups, since it is understood that actors compete to influence public policy directly or indirectly (see Sutton, 1999; Kingdon, 2014; Dye 2014 and Olufemi, 2016). Public policy is more than a governmental decision, that is, it may also be the result of decisions and actions of other actors, such as civil society and the market. This means that public policies are shaped at all stages, by different actors and institutions. Actors can establish relationships (whether formalized networks or not) according to their beliefs or interests in the defence of an idea, their idea being affected by the context in which they operate and influenced by external events (Almeida & Gomes, 2018). The analysing of policy processes means understanding how actors, institutions, networks/subsystems, ideas/beliefs, contextual factors and events interact in what is

known as the policy process. In a nutshell, studying the policy process means analysing the interactions that occur overtime between public policies and actors and events, contexts and outcomes.

Birkland (2007) also explains that public policy does not happen in a vacuum—it does not happen in isolation. Thus, public policy happens in a broader context with other concerns, priorities and issues swirling about. Howlett et al. (2009) point out that what happens in one policy has implications in other policies. For example, energy policy has implications for health policy and education and vice versa. Thus, policy areas are well interrelated. As a result, policy action on a particular, even seemingly unrelated issue may be competing with action on another issue. Government can handle a certain number of policy issues at any given time. To this effect, all sorts of policies compete with one another to become priorities of government. Not every issue can be the government's or society's top priority. Additionally, the priorities of government can change rapidly and dramatically with focusing events (Birkland, 2007). Focusing events are significant episodes or experiences that can catapult particular issues to prominence on the public's agenda, (ibid). One basic example of focusing events in Malawi may be natural disasters.

2.2.3 Politics of Policy Processes and Renewable Energy

Energy is the engine of economic growth and its role in development is crucial. One of the challenges developing countries face is inadequate access to energy. Only a small percentage of these countries' population has access to electricity. Furthermore, in these countries just a small percentage of the population has access to the national grid, and this is largely urban and semi-urban population. Persistent blackouts are the order of the day and this is hindering economic development of these countries (see Taalo et al., 2015 and Egute, 2017). There is also little development regarding rural electrification schemes, and this is attributed to inability to pay connection charges and electricity bills by the rural people (Egute, 2017).

The challenges of growing energy demand and environmental pollution require policies and governance on energy resources. As argued by Lu et al. (2020) a systematic energy transition towards more efficient energy regimes requires a strategically desired sequence of actions involving all policy levels, from local to

global. This therefore means that there is a fierce competition at the agenda setting stage. (Birkland, 2007) record that no society or political institution have the capacity to address all possible alternatives to all possible problems that rise at any one time. This may mean that international systems are also increasingly vital in shaping domestic public choice and policy developments (Howlett et al., 2009). Like other more formal institutions, international regimes affect public policy by promoting certain options and constraining others. For example, over the years, the World Bank and other donors promoting the good governance agenda in least developed countries have affected both the economic and political policies in these countries (Booth, 2012).

Additionally, international regimes/systems shape actors' preferences and the ease with which they can be realized. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the international monetary regime, enables its officers to intervene in the intimate issues of public policymaking in many countries facing serious financial or fiscal difficulties. However, international regimes do not affect all nations equally. The more powerful countries enjoy greater policy autonomy within the international system than their less powerful counterparts. For example, the United States during the Bush administration declared that they had no interest in implementing the Kyoto treaty limiting greenhouse gas emissions (Gastal, 2007). Chisinga (2010) also explains that Malawi stood staunchly during the 2005/2006 subsidy program despite some donors totally opposing it and pulling out their funds.

Furthermore, due to their size and strength Transnational Corporations (TNCs) are major players in the world economy and, by implication, in politics and public policy. According to Howlett et al. (2009) TNCs can cause serious damage to a country's economy by withholding investment or deciding to take their investment elsewhere. This is a possibility that policymakers can ignore only at a great economic peril. There is also a competition among countries to attract TNCs by offering conditions that are appealing. Thus, countries control labour costs, alter their tax regimes and set minimal restrictions on international trade and investment (Stiglitz & Rosengard, 2015; Howlett et al., 2009). Such pledges can also be elicited by transnational financial companies such as banks and bond rating agencies. These ones can downgrade bank debt and increase the cost governments must pay to borrow money

abroad. All these pressures create severe restrictions on state's policy options, not just in economic matters but in non-economic matters as well.

As explained by Burke and Stephens (2017) opportunities to venture into renewable energy sources, target energy systems as key sites of political-economic contests, shifting power over diverse aspects of these sectors including generation, distribution, finance, technology and knowledge. Devaux (2008) explains that in African countries it is common for an electricity market to be operated by a monopoly, often a state-owned utility, which is in full control of generation, distribution and the sale of electricity to consumers. This provides little incentive for the development of energy technologies. As a result, Africa has the largest number of people relying on traditional fuels for cooking and heating. Against this background, there is a growing consensus that efforts to disseminate renewables in these countries have fallen short of expectations. In fact, renewables have not attracted the level of investment and policy commitment they deserve. Resources allocated to developing renewables are negligible in comparison to resources allocated to the conventional energy sector (Prasad et al., 2007).

The need to secure social acceptance of energy transition is pushing policymakers and energy sector companies to engage with the previously unnoticed 'social' aspects of energy policy, which are in fact deeply political (Szulecki & Overland, 2020). As pointed by Burke and Stephens (2017) the renewable energy agenda rejects the view of energy transition as simple technological substitution; rather renewable energy transitions cannot avoid the re-ordering of social and political relations. Burke and Stephens (2017) explain that the renewable energy transition is fundamentally a political struggle as efforts to shift from fossil fuels and decarbonize societies will not prove effective without confronting and destabilizing the dominant systems of energy power. On this note, in some developed countries, the overwhelmingly fossil fuel dominated energy portfolio leaves little room for renewable energies (Gastal, 2007). However, because of growing public concern over environmental issues and the world dependence on unstable countries for oil production, a new drive towards renewable energies is growing.

Rennkamp et al. (2017) also point out that the emergence of renewable energy policy results from the structure of discourse coalitions assembled in favor of and against

renewable energy policies. The structure of coalitions of domestic actors determines the success or failure of renewable energy initiatives, as some actors expect gains from renewable energy programs while others fear losing existing benefits. This agrees with Burke and Stephens (2017) who argue that a shift to renewable energies does not only eschew centralized commodity-based energy models but also the deep-rooted historical inequalities, ideologies, alliances with large corporate profit interests and concentrations of economic and political power among others.

2.2.4 *Agenda Setting*

At any point in time, society is characterized by a plethora of issues seeking the attention of policy makers. That being the case, it is not possible to pay attention to all the problems at the same time. As a result, issues and their proponents compete for governmental attention (see Cobb et al., 1976; Brasil & Jones, 2020). Cobb et al. (1976) explain that the process by which demands of various groups in the population are translated into items vying for serious attention of public officials can appropriately be called ‘agenda building.’ It has to be highlighted however, that the definition of an agenda is much greater than simply a cacophony of public and private affairs because it involves more than a jumble of issues that groups and institutions see as urgent and subject to immediate attention. Indeed, agenda setting is marked by a process of filtering themes and subjects that do not only depend on individual values of the actors or institutions involved, but also on the perception these actors have on whether the prioritized subject has the potential to be executed. On this note, Kingdon (1984) says this does not imply that decision makers only prioritize issues that can be resolved: there are values and intentions in this process.

Accordingly, agenda setting has a political significance as what happens at this early stage of the policy process has a decisive impact on the entire subsequent policy cycle and its outcomes. Howlett et al. (2009) explain that the manner and form in which problems are recognized, if they are recognized at all, are important determinants of whether, and how, they will ultimately be addressed by policymakers. To this end, agenda setting is the process by which problems and alternative solutions gain or lose public and elite attention (ibid).

At the agenda setting stage, group competition is fierce because through control of the agenda some issues are organized into politics, while others are organized out. Thus, securing the agenda is elemental as it becomes a primary tool for securing and extending power. On this note, Birkland (2007) explains that groups fight to earn their issues' places among all other issues sharing the limited space on the agenda or to prepare for a time when a crisis makes their issue more likely to occupy a more prominent space on the agenda. It does not mean however that when a problem is recognized as requiring government action, it will ultimately be addressed (see Dye, 2014; Kingdon, 2014 & Howlett et al., 2009). Even when an issue gets attention, groups must fight to ensure that their depiction of the issue remain in the forefront and that their preferred approaches to the problems are those that are most actively considered. Birkland (2007) explains that groups do so because the group that successfully describes the problem will also be the one that defines the solutions to it, thereby prevailing in policy debate. At the same time, groups fight to keep policies off the agenda; indeed, such blocking is as important as the affirmative act of attempting to get action.

Howlett et al. (2009) explain that while threats and challenges are more frequently the forces that motivate issue definition in policy agenda setting, there are also times when policy agendas are set by an attraction of an opportunity. Thus, according to Almeida and Gomes (2018) the priorities of government can change rapidly and dramatically with focusing events.

2.2.4.1 Focusing Events

Owing to the fact that, in any society, there are a many issues or problems seeking policymakers' attention, and that competition might be fierce because the agenda space is limited, thus, making the system unable to accommodate all issues and ideas (Cobb et al., 1976; Birkland, 1998), it is only logical that society allocates means to priority issues. However, there are instances when some events trigger demand for a preferred path toward policy intervention. According to Atikson (2018), these are focusing events and they can make government decision-makers aware of a problem. In other words, the focusing events elevate policy items from the unofficial or public agenda onto the government one as they capture in a nutshell some sort of reality that people already sense in a vaguer, more diffuse way (Kingdon, 2003). Along this line

of thinking Birkland (1997) argues that focusing events are significant episodes or experiences that can catapult particular issues to prominence on the public's agenda.

Birkland (1998) argues that focusing events gain attention more suddenly and rapidly than problems such as crime or disease that longer-term analysis of statistical evidence seeks to understand. In his argument, Birkland (1998) also holds that the immediate harms done by focusing events highlight problems to which government or other institutions might respond. These harms are usually concentrated in a particular geographical area so that evidence of the harms is more obvious than when the harms are distributed throughout a region or a country. One basic example, is the occurrence of natural disasters.

Like other public policy problems, focusing events can lead interest groups, government leaders, policy entrepreneurs, the news media or members of the public to identify new problems, or to pay greater attention to the existing but dormant problems, potentially leading to a search for solutions in the wake of apparent policy failure (Birkland, 1998). Thus, focusing events construe as much a political significance in agenda setting as different groups debate on probable solutions to the problem(s).

2.2.4.2 The Social Construction of Public Policy Problems

The ideas policy actors hold have a significant effect on the decisions they make. Thus, traditions, beliefs and attitudes about the world and society affect how individuals interpret their interests. Howlett et al. (2009) explains that on this note, the sets of ideas or ideologies can have a significant impact on public policymaking, for it is through these ideational prisms that individuals conceive of social or other problems that inspire their demands for government action and through which they design proposed solutions to these problems. However, different types of ideas have different effects on policymaking, and especially on agenda setting.

Edelman as cited by Howlett et al. (2009) says, issues arise largely on their own within social discourses, often as functions of pre-existing ideological constructs applied to specific day-to-day circumstances. In this view, problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies, not simply because they are there or because they are important for well-being. They signify who are virtuous and

useful and who are dangerous and inadequate, which actions will be rewarded and which ones will be penalized (Dye, 2014). They constitute people as subjects with particular kinds of aspirations, self-concepts, and facts, and they create beliefs about the relative importance of events and objects. They are critical in determining who exercise authority and who accepts it (Howlett et al., 2009).

In other words, policy makers are part of the same discourses as the public and the political spectacle, and they are involved in manipulating the signs, sets and scenes of the political drama. Thus, at the agenda setting stage, different groups are involved and different outcomes prescribed (see also Birkland, 2007). The discursive frames from which actors define policy challenges, of course, are not always widely, or as strongly, held by all policy actors, meaning that the agenda setting process very often features a crush of frames and a struggle among policy actors over the naming of problems, the blaming of conditions and actors for their existence, and the claiming of specific vintage points or perspectives for their resolution (Howlett et al., 2009; Birkland, 2007). The resolution of this conflict and elevation of a private or social grievance to the status of a public problem, therefore, is often related more to the abilities and resources of competing actors than to the elegance or purity of their ideas, but these ideas are critical in determining its content.

In this view, then, policymaking agenda is created out of the history, traditions, attitudes and beliefs encapsulated and codified in the discourses constructed by social and political actors. Symbols and statistics, both real and fabricated, are used to back up one's preferred understanding of the causes and solutions of a problem (Hill & Varone, 2016)

2.2.4.3 *Levels of Agenda Setting*

Agendas exist at all levels of government. Every community and every level of government has a collection of issues that are available for discussion and dispositions, or that are being actively considered. It is worthwhile to think of several levels of the agenda. The largest level of the agenda is the *agenda universe*, which contains all ideas that could possibly be brought up and discussed in a society or a political system (Birkland, 2007). In a democracy, we can think of all the possible ideas as being quite unconstrained, although, even in democracies the expression of

some ideas is officially or unofficially constrained. According to Cobb and Elder as cited by Birkland (2007) the *systemic agenda* consists of all issues that are commonly perceived by members of the community as meriting public's attention and as involving matters within the legitimate jurisdiction of existing governmental authority. However defined, the systemic agenda is further from enactment in the sense that anything on this level is a policy possibility as long as it is largely and politically sound (Hill & Varone, 2016).

If something reaches the systemic agenda it may then move on to the *institutional agenda*. The institutional agenda is defined as those problems that legislators or public officials feel obliged to take appropriate measures and actually act on—not much will reach the institutional agenda. Finally, there is *the decision agenda* which are the items about to be acted on by a governmental body (Howlett et al, 2009; Kingdon 2014; Hill & Varone, 2016). Groups want to advance their issues to the decision agenda, but block other groups getting their issues close to the decision agenda. Thus, there is a lot of competition to reach this stage. Even when the problem is on the agenda, there may be considerable controversy and competition over how the problem should be defined, the causes of the problem, and the policies that should be implemented to resolve it. The best ideas are not necessarily the ones that get put on the agenda because certain groups have more power than others (see Howlett et al., 2009; Birkland, 2007). This suggest that there are models of agenda setting that explaining how individuals and/or groups compete to set the agenda and direct the debate towards their particular concern.

2.2.4.4 *Modes of Agenda Setting*

In policymaking, an essential characteristic of any polity is the way that different groups participate in the process of policy formulation (see Birkland, 2007; Howlett et al., 2009; Dye 2014; Kingdon, 2014 and Hill & Varone, 2016). In most communities, the number of potential public issues far exceeds the capabilities of decision-making institutions to process them. Issues or their proponents compete for a place on the decision-making agenda (Birkland, 2007). Cobb et al. (1976) say that the process by which demands of various groups in the population are translated into items vying for the serious attention of public officials can appropriately be called agenda building. Thus, analytically, there are three models of agenda building depending on variations

in four major characteristics of issue careers: initiation; specification; expansion; and entrance. Furthermore, each of these models is linked with a specific type of political regime (see also Howlett et al., 2009).

According to Cobb et al. (1976) the first, *the outside initiative model*, accounts for the process through which issues arise in non-governmental groups and are then expanded sufficiently to reach first, the public agenda and, finally, the formal agenda. The second, the *mobilization model*, consider issues which are initiated inside government and consequently achieve formal agenda status almost automatically. Successful implementation of these issues often requires, however that they be placed on a public agenda as well. Thus, the mobilization model accounts for the ways in which decision makers attempt to implement a policy by expanding an issue from the formal agenda to the public agenda (see also Howlett et al., 2009). The third, the *inside initiative model*, describes issues which arise within the governmental sphere and whose supporters do not try to expand them to the mass public. Instead, these supporters base their hopes of success on their own ability to apply sufficient pressure to assure formal agenda status, a favorable decision and successful implementation. In this model, initiating groups often specifically wish to prevent an issue from expanding to the mass public, they do not want issues on the public agenda.

Cobb et al. (1976) and also Howlett et al. (2009) explain that the outside initiation model is typical of liberal democracies, while the mobilization model is a characteristic of one-party states, and the inside initiation reflects authoritarian bureaucratic regimes. However, Cobb et al. (1976) note that the models are conceptual rather than empirical. In fact, most occurrences of agenda building are certainly more complex, combining models as well as levels of agenda. Thus, in most societies an issue may potentially appear on many agendas. Attempts to achieve agenda status for any issue may be aimed at one of these agendas at a time, in different possible sequences, or at some or all of them simultaneously. Since the three models of agenda building may also occur in various combinations during the history of any issue, many permutations of agendas and agenda building are possible.

2.2.5 Policy Narratives

Public policymaking is a complex process and, in all societies, there are a lot of actors and issues involved at any particular time (Cobb et al., 1976; Birkland, 1998). These actors always seek the attention of policymakers and there is contention to influence policymaker's choices among policy alternatives. Furthermore, drawing insights from policy windows as articulated by Kingdon (2014) it can be shown that open windows are small and scarce, that is, opportunities come but they also pass—windows do not stay open for long. This may mean that sometimes policy actors need to tell a persuasive story to frame a policy problem as policymakers make choices in a short space of time. In this sense, Cairney and Kwiatkowski (2017) argue that narrative information can be more useful than statistical data, partly because the latter can be seen as too complex, tedious, not policy-relevant, or lacking context sensitivity. Thus, policymakers prefer information that is concise, appealing and relevant to current policy debates, and policy narratives provide just that. To this end, Huda (2018) argues that policy narratives are critical to the meaning-making process since they can be used to persuade policy actors toward a particular policy preference or to influence decision-making. Fadlallah et al. (2019) also explain that narratives can facilitate information processing and provide value and emotional aspect to the information provided. Additionally, people can easily relate to narrative information regardless of their level of literacy, expertise or culture. Along this line of thinking, Curran (2012) says that the force of narratives lie in their capacity to simplify complex information that has to be rendered digestible for public consumption, as well as in a manner that wins desired support.

According to Sutton (1999) and Wolmer (2006), policy narratives describe events or define the world in certain ways, and so shape policy decisions. In this way, it can be said that a policy narrative provides both a diagnosis and a set of measures and interventions. In other words, narratives define a problem, explain how it comes about, and shows what needs to be done to avert disaster or to bring about a happy ending (Wolmer, 2006). Simply put, narratives define what is wrong and how it must be put right. Policy narratives often get validity (despite or even because of) the fact that they often simplify complex issues and processes. This makes issues appealing to politicians or managers—sweeping people along. Sutton (1999) promulgates that policy narratives are embedded in particular institutional structures or actor-network

groups and has strong cultural and historical roots. As explained by Wolmer (2006) some narratives tend to gain more authority, persisting at the expense of others and hence have more bearing on policy decisions. As a result, these will often be contested by alternative policy narratives that frame policy problems and solutions in different ways.

It must be noted however that policy narratives are distant from discourses, which refer to a wider set of values and a way of thinking. A narrative can be part of a discourse if it describes a specific story which is in line with the broader set of values and priorities of a discourse (Sutton, 1999).

2.2.5.1 Renewable Policy Narratives

Energy transitions are fundamental processes in the evolution of human societies as climate change is a major global problem. However, its redress challenges established economic patterns and interests, and the government-business relations cultures that intersect those interests. This means that in energy transitions there are losers and winners. Therefore, in order to take advantage of the contestations that characterize desirable energy futures, policy actors use narratives as they simplify and communicate complex issues and enable actors to make decisions in the face of uncertainty and complexity (Mohan & Topp, 2018). Indeed, in explaining energy futures, narratives play a central role in the way individuals process information, communicate and reason. In this context, narratives create realities, that is, influencing what we see and think, how we see things and how we behave. Consequently, political, economic and social decisions tend to follow dominant narratives (Garha et al., 2022).

Mohan and Topp (2018) observe that dominant narratives capture how stories and rhetoric coalesce into stable meaning systems, institutional practices, and power structures that can constrain or shape agency. A dominant narrative can also legitimate the diffusion of, say, a specific large-scale energy technology. It has to be highlighted however that narratives can be complementary, competing and substitutional, but their importance cannot be overlooked because they form and legitimize policy and behavior, creating the necessary momentum for political movement and changes in behavior.

One of the key driving forces behind a growing demand of renewable energy is that of reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the aim of mitigating climate change (Sathaye et al., 2011). The argument is that, while different paths can mitigate climate change, renewable energy and energy efficiency provide the optimal pathways to deliver the majority of the cuts needed at the necessary speed (IRENA, 2018).

Another story line for renewables touch on the concept of social and economic development (see IRENA, 2018; Sathaye et al., 2011). A key point is that aggregate macroeconomic parameters—Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita GDP or even the extended version of these economic indicators—Human Development Index (HDI), are insufficient for obtaining a clear picture of the sustainability of social and economic development. A further indicator of development is decreasing energy intensity, that is, a decrease in the amount of energy to produce a dollar of GDP. Thus, the narrative is, beyond indicators that explain the efficiency characteristics of an economy, additional macroeconomic benefits are potentially associated with renewable energy, for example, increased employment opportunities. Furthermore, under international agreements, financial pledges have been made by wealthier nations to developing countries with climate mitigation measures (Sathaye et al., 2011). Each of these may have either positive or negative effects, depending on regional context and on the particular policies that are implemented.

Furthermore, significant parts of the global population have no or limited access to modern and clean energy services (Taulo et al., 2015). A sustainable energy expansion needs to increase the availability of energy services to groups that currently have no or limited access to them; the poor, those in rural areas and those without connections to the grid. In other words, renewable energy can contribute to increasing the reliability of energy services, in particular in remote and rural areas that often suffer from insufficient grid access. For households, the impacts from polluting and inefficient energy services on women have made them severely marginalized. According to Okello et al. (2018) the dependency on inefficient sources of energy poses a considerable threat to women's health, as in most developing societies, women bear the sole responsibility of preparing a meal for the whole family. Again, women spend most of their time collecting woods, crops residues, and manure as cooking fuel—a practice that widely affects girls' education because they are not left

with sufficient time to study (see also Taalo et al., 2015). Here the narrative is that providing access to modern energy to the poorest members of the society is crucial for the achievement of SDGs (IRENA, 2018).

Lastly, is the narrative of energy security. Given the interdependence of economic growth and energy consumption, access to stable energy supply is a major political concern and a technical and economic challenge facing both the developed and developing economies, since prolonged energy disruptions would create serious economic and basic functionality problems for most societies (Ölz et al., 2017). It is also highlighted that in the long term, the potential for fossil fuel scarcity and decreasing quality of fossil fuel reserves represents an important reason for a transition to a sustainable worldwide renewable energy system. In addition, *ceteris paribus*, the more reliant an energy system is on a single energy source, the more susceptible it is to serious disruptions. Thus, the implementation of renewable energy represents a potential source of energy security for both developing and developed countries (Sathaye et al., 2011).

2.2.6 Policy Actors

Policy formulation is an activity related to the development and synthesis of alternative solutions to a problem. Generally, policy process encompasses an intricate series of smaller processes. Consequent upon the intricacies involved, specific crucial actors play roles in the policymaking process. Heyi (2020) elucidates that policy actors are those individuals and groups, both formal and informal, which pursue to impact the making and execution of public policies. The part each player plays, and the link between actors, is what determines policy results. Kingdon (2014) categorizes these actors into two; (i) *participants on the inside of government* and (ii) *participants outside of government, but not just looking in*. The participants on the inside of government include those with legal authority to engage in the processes of public policy formulation. Included in this category are the legislators, the executive, the administrators and the judiciary (see also Abdulla et al., 2017; Olufemi, 2016). They are government actors who occupy formal public positions and political offices and serve as the actual policy makers. According to Kingdon (2014), participants outside of government, but not just looking in are those without formal government positions and include interest groups, researchers, academia, consultants, media, political

parties, and other elections-related actors, and the mass public. Abdulla et al. (2017) and Olufemi (2016) categorizes these two actors as *official policymakers* and *unofficial policymakers* respectively.

However, the line between the official and unofficial policymakers is difficult to draw as people traffic in and out of government, sometimes occupying government positions, and at other times being lobbyists, consultants or just names about town (Kingdon, 2014). Furthermore, the communication channels between those inside and those outside of government are extraordinarily open, and ideas and information float about through these channels in the whole issue of network of involved people, somewhat independent of their formal positions (ibid). It is also reported by Kingdon (2014) that common values, orientations and world views form bridges, at least to some degree, between those inside and those outside of government (see also Sutton, 1999). Despite the distinctions made, inside and outside retains an important meaning. People in governmental positions have formal authority granted by statutes and the constitution, a status those outside government cannot enjoy.

Actors influence the way policy turns out one way instead of another. This behavioral orientation, however is tempered by the fact that what actors seek and do depends on the political, economic and social structures that surround them. Howlett et al. (2009) posit that many of the analytical approaches to public policy fail to adequately consider all of the different actors, institutions and ideas that affect public policy. Welfare economics and public choice theory, for example, treat individual and group actors as key explanatory variables and would thus suggest that policy context should be mainly seen from the perspective of these individuals. Theories built on group and class theory, such as pluralism and Marxism, attribute influence to organized groups of actors affected by social, economic and political structures, but still considers actors to be primary and other factors such as structures and ideas to be secondary or peripheral (Howelett et al., 2009).

On the international scene, international actors vary considerably in their ability to influence domestic policies, and this, to a significant extent is the result of differences in their resource endowments. An even more significant resource at the international level is the actor's theoretical and practical expertise in a policy sector (Jones et al., 2009). Many international organizations, for example the World Bank, IMF,

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and World Health Organization (WHO) are vast repositories of established expertise in policy issues, and governments rely on this expertise when making policies, thus giving such international actors influence in the policy process (Howlett et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2009).

The financial resources that international organizations can dispense to governments are another source of influence. The different level of expertise and finance that international organizations can deploy often turn out to be crucial determinants of the impact that international actors can have on domestic policies. However, it has to be noted that not all international actors work for public entities or private agencies. An influential niche has been carved out by international NGOs that advocate policy issues and options (Howlett et al., 2009).

2.2.6.1 Policy Universe: Policy Subsystems, Policy Networks, Policy Communities, and Policy Discourses

According to Howlett et al. (2009), the policy universe can be thought of as encompassing aggregation of all possible international, state, and social actors and institutions that directly or indirectly affect a specific policy area. The actors and institutions found in each sector of issue area can be said to constitute a policy subsystem within a larger political system. Many sub-systems are not all powerful and in fact their policymaking influence vary across issues and overtime. This therefore means that a policy universe is filled with distinctive constellation of actors, ideas and institutions that constitute the space where actual problems are engaged. According to Jenkins-Smith et al. (1991) within policy subsystems, members tend to cluster into competing coalitions that advocate distinct policy viewpoints.

Definitions of policy subsystems vary across the literature with a number of variants including whirlpools, subgovernments, iron triangles and issue networks. Weible (2008) citing Sabatier explains that borrowing from the advocacy coalition framework, policy subsystems are semiautonomous decision-making networks of policy participants that focus on a particular policy issue usually within a geographical boundary. According to Thurber (1996) policy subsystems are decentralized power structures with predictable informal communication patterns

among participants who come primarily from the private sector, non-profits, academia, consulting firms, the news media, engaged citizens, and possibly others. Thus, policy subsystems can be characterized by network of actors, the substantive domain with which they are concerned, and various modes of decision making. They are organized to make focused demands on policy makers and to influence specific programs. Policy subsystems are dynamic and evolve because of society's need to divide decision-making tasks and promote the development of knowledge to solve public problems. Political power in each area is wielded by actors who often serve their own private interests. To this end, most public problems considered by subsystems are addressed without being fully considered in the electoral arena (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992).

A major characteristic of subsystem politics is its low level of visibility to the public and lack of involvement by the electorate. Ng (2004) highlights that groups not possessing significant resources for exchange are unable to gain recognition and access the process of decision making. Furthermore, Thurber (1996) also explains that policy subsystems evolve in such a way that important actors are hidden to the general public and non-subsystem players. Since policy subsystems are organized around single issues or programs, they are rarely perceived to be important to a large constituency in the general public. Subsystem become naturally closed and out of the public eye because it is the most efficient way to make decisions about complicated and highly technical issues.

In modern governments public policies are made and delivered via some kind of hybrid management involving a range of different actors, including some representing private or non-governmental institutions (Peterson, 2003). According to Wolmer (2006) in any given policy domain different actors link up parts of the bureaucracy and government with the private sector, donors and actors in the civil society for example; journalists, researchers and NGOs. Interactions within and among government agencies and social organizations constitute policy networks that are instrumental in formulating and developing policy (Howlett et al., 2009). The term '*network*' is frequently used to describe clusters of different kinds of actors who are linked together in political, social and economic life. To this end, the term '***policy network***' connotes a cluster of actors, each of which has an interest in a given policy

sector and the capacity to determine policy success or failure (Peterson, 2003). Indisputably, networks may facilitate bargaining between stakeholders over policy design and detail. Notwithstanding, networks may be loosely structured and lacking hierarchies but still capable of spreading information or engaging in collective action.

Modern governments are characterized by differentiated polity where decision rules and dominant actors vary significantly between public policy sectors. The general picture here is one of diversity. Wolmer (2006) highlights that processes of negotiating and bargaining between competing interest groups are central to policy making. In fact, policies rise and fall in prominence as a result of the changing effectiveness of different networks of actors in policy debates. Networks can gradually change narratives as well as reinforce them, as they bring people together who exchange ideas and strategies. Peterson (2003) explains that battles for political turf are frequent and fierce, as are attempts to build high firewalls around policies in a given sector so that policies cannot be altered or undone by actors from other sectors. A policy network therefore is an entity in which there are institutional and non-institutional mechanisms for inclusion and exclusion (Ng, 2004). It has to be noted however, that policy networks tend to be discrete, distinct and largely disconnected from one another even when they preside over policies that are clearly connected, for example, agriculture and environmental protection.

Miller and Demir (2007) define a ***policy community*** as a part of an idiom that signifies extra-formal interactions (that is interactions taking place beyond or outside of the formal processes of government) that occur in the interstices between and among government agencies, interest groups, corporations, industry associations, elected officials, and other institutions and individuals. Hey (2020) highlights that policy communities reflect a policy process where organized groups and government actors play a key role in determining the path and result of public policies. A policy community is a special type of interconnected social formation, wherein communication and influence may flow in nonhierarchical patterns and the resultant policy activism is associated with governmental fragmentation and political particularism.

Sutton (2009) however explains that there is much debate about policy networks and policy communities. Atkison and Coleman (1992) explain that there are those who

propose that 'network' should be a master concept, and that policy community is best understood as a type of network. On this note, Rhodes & Marsh (1992) defines policy community as a network characterized by stable relationships, restrictive membership, vertical interdependence and insulation from other networks and institutions. According to the authors, networks are stable, less restrictive and so on, and are given different names. Wilks and Wright (1987) employ an alternative approach. They argued that 'policy community' refers to all actors or political actors who share either an interest in a policy area or a common 'policy focus,' and who, over time, succeed in shaping policy. They reserve the term 'policy network' for describing the nature of linking processes that occurs within this community. Furthermore, Coleman and Skogstad as cited by Sutton (2009) adopt essentially the same distinction. They highlighted that a policy network refers to the properties that characterizes the relationships among particular set of actors that forms around an issue of importance to the policy community. Thus, the community refers to the actors; the network refers to the relationship among actors, particularly in the sub-government.

Atikson and Coleman (1992) explain that whatever the level of analysis, communities or networks have conceptual appeal because they convey, simultaneously, the impression of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Networks have shape and identity, but they are also open systems that do not have clear boundaries. Communities suggest a more organic connection among participants, but they too are relatively open. Whatever the resolution on the network/community debate, it is apparent that networks and communities are natural conceptual responses to both the limits of the market and hierarchical arrangements, to the enormous expansion in the types of societal actors involved in policymaking and to the dispersion of specialized policy resources (ibid).

It is almost a commonplace to state that political problems are socially constructed. This is to say that, whether or not a situation is perceived as a political problem depends on the narrative in which it is discussed. In this respect there are many possible realities. On this note, Hajer (1993) explains, however social constructs do not arise in a historical vacuum. They emerge in the context of historical discourses which contain knowledge of how similar phenomena were dealt with in the past. **Discourse** is defined by Hajer (1993) as an ensemble of ideas, concepts and

categories through which meaning is given to phenomena. Thus, discourses frame certain problems, which means, they distinguish some aspects of a situation rather than others (see also Gasper and Apthorpe, 1996). According to Jones (2009) it is the discursive structures (concepts, metaphors, linguistic codes, rules of logic, etc.), often taken for granted that contain cognitive and normative elements that determine what policy-makers can more easily understand and articulate, and hence which policy ideas are likely to be adopted. Furthermore, Sutton (2009) explains that discourses function to simplify complex problems, and that they serve the interests of some groups over others. This is to say, discourses work by setting up the terms of reference by disallowing or marginalizing alternatives. Accordingly, the dominant interests they support define the issue about which policy is made, provide the framework in which alternatives are considered, influence the options which are chosen and impact on the process of implementation.

Jones (2009) also argues that approaching policy as a discourse involves seeing knowledge and power as intertwined. This is so because discourse encompasses the concepts and ideas relevant for policy, and the interactive processes for communication and policy formulation that serves to generate and disseminate those ideas. On this note, Hajer (1993) writes, discourses can be taken as an example of the capture and exercise of power by some people, arguments and organizations against others through specific happenings, in particular arenas, over various periods of time. Accordingly, as Hajer (1993) explains, a discourse coalition is basically a group of actors who share a social construct. Obviously, the process of constructing or framing, political problems is a highly significant element of the political process as actors try to impose their views of reality on others. They sometimes do this through debates and persuasion, but also through manipulation and exercise of power. In this case, once a discourse is formulated, it will produce storylines on specific problems. Storylines are the medium through which actors try to impose their views of reality on others, suggesting certain social positions and practices, and criticizing alternative social arrangements (*ibid*).

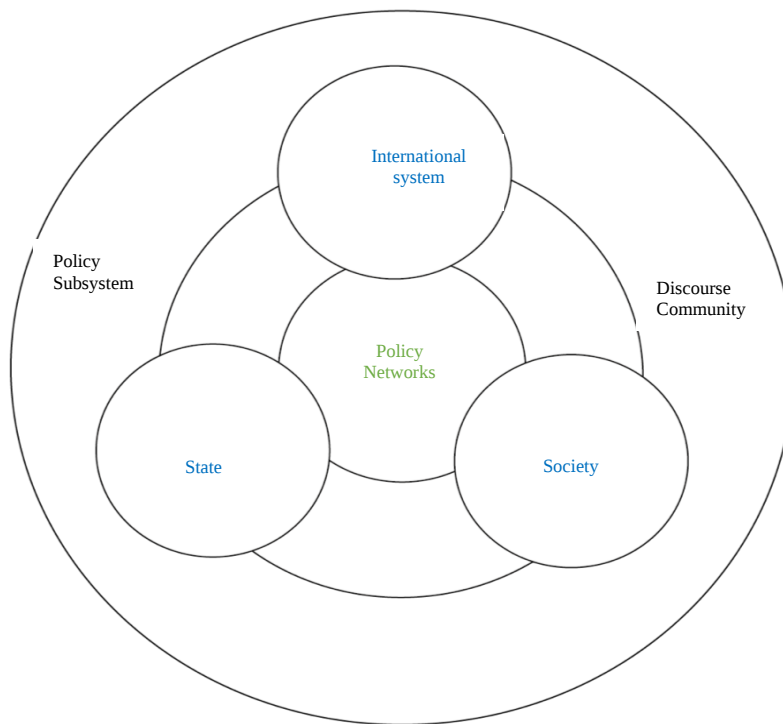


Figure 1: Policy Universe and Policy Subsystems

Adapted from Howlett et al. (2009), page 84

Notwithstanding, political discourse is not a uniform whole. Discourse formation takes place on many different levels and in many different localities (Hajer, 1993). Furthermore, owing to the fact that there might be a number of discourse coalitions around a specific policy problem, and that policies are interrelated, actors characteristically deal with mixes of elements from various discourses (Keely & Scoones, 2000). Thus, the political arguments of actors typically rest on more than one discourse at a time, and in these instances, conflict is inevitable.

However, it has to be noted that policy narratives are distinct from discourses, which refer to a wider set of values and a way of thinking. A narrative can be part of a discourse if it describes a specific ‘story’ which is in line with the broader set of values and priorities of a discourse (Sutton, 1999).

2.2.7 Politics and Interests

The role of politics in the policy processes remains a subject of much interest and contention within the policy sciences. According to Howlett and Ramesh (1998), the debate stems from the different uses to which the term ‘politics’ is put. Some take it to refer to any element in the policy process that is not purely ‘rational’ or technical in nature and therefore subject to conflicting interpretations. Thus, it can extend from conflicts between self-interested parties over particular policy proposals to more generalized ideological debates between competing worldviews. Others take the term ‘politics’ to refer only to the interaction of organized, and self-proclaimed, political entities in the policy process (ibid). However explained, the central problem in understanding the role of politics in the policy process is to comprehend how demands for a policy arise and are articulated by policy actors.

As highlighted by Wolmer (2006), policy is set out as objective, neutral, value-free and is often termed in scientific language, which emphasizes its rationality. In this way the political nature of the policy is hidden by the use of technical language, which emphasizes rationality and objectivity. However, the technical is in some way political. On this note, Howlett and Ramesh (1998) explains that the overall conceptions or ideas held by policymakers contain an inherently political element that affects policy outcomes. Furthermore, Gomez-Arias (2019) explains that public policies are not always decisions made in favor of public interests, however they are changeable expressions of social conflicts between antagonistic groups fighting for their own benefit. To this end, public policies are political devices that are developed to control both the tangible and intangible resources of society, and as such they are administered by different subgroups in defense of their own interests. Although these interests are not explicit, easily identifiable, or publicly recognized, they play a fundamental role in the formation of political groups and in the formation of the political agenda (ibid).

In the light of their interests, political actors do not behave like a homogenous group. They differentiate among themselves and elaborate their own conception of problems and the actions that they deem most appropriate as a solution (Gomez-Arias, 2019). Accordingly, the policy process is influenced by a range of interest groups that exert power and authority over policy making. These influences affect each stage of the

policy process, from agenda setting, to the identification of alternatives, weighing up the options, choosing the most favorable and implementing it. Contradictions and conflicts emerge to make society more dynamic and make hegemonic groups to rethink their strategies. Furthermore, Wolmer (2006) argues that the vested interests of various actors in policy might be served by the perpetuation of narratives. Howlett and Ramesh (1998) discuss that the study of policymaking is a focus on the way in which the language of politics constructs public policies, since the language of politics is inscribed with interpretations of what a policy problem is.

It is further argued by Wolmer (2006) that bureaucrats are not simply neutral executors of policy, they have their own personal political agendas to negotiate (see also Sutton, 2009). Norcross (2019) argues that decisions are made through conflict, negotiation and bargaining between members of the bureaucracy. Thus, bureaucrats enter the fray with their own goals, narratives and concepts. To this end, success is not measured by rational outcomes, but the ability of the bureaucrats to persuade others to their cause. As a vast majority of policies are made in groups, these conflicts are a constant force, and they play a major role in the decision making of the bureaucracy. According to Norcross (2019), the type of department in terms of who controls the policy is also a site of conflict, and this is so because the complexity of policy dilemmas increasingly requires the establishment of new agencies or departments. The pre-existing agencies or departments do not like the introduction of new ones into their domain as they perceive them to be a threat to their goals, values and image of their agency or department. Wolmer (2006) also points out that bureaucratic politics, such as battles within ministries for control over policy areas, are relevant. It might therefore be concluded that fighting between departments and groups of departments fed by collective desires for bigger budgets, personnel and prestige create an environment of bargaining and conflict that overwhelmingly shapes policy.

2.2.8 Policy Spaces, Policy Levels and Power

Public policymaking is characterized by a clash of ideas, interests and values, with many different actors interacting often under intense and focused political pressure. This means that disagreements over objectives can ensue because any particular

problem may have multiple potential solutions, each with differing costs and benefits, and these options require comparative assessment to guide decision making. However, bearing in mind that time is a luxury that policy actors do not have because windows of opportunity do not stay open for long (Kingdon, 2014), policymakers may subtly organize some issues into politics and organize others out by using policy spaces to avoid some of the deep-rooted contestations that characterise policy processes.

According to Gaventa et al. (2009) spaces refer to decision-making arenas and forums for action, but they can also include other 'spaces' that are seen as opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships which affect their lives and interests. Jackson (2021) define policy space as boundaries within which decision-makers can create policies. Arenas of politics and of governance convey spaces where voices and ideas jostle for attention. Cornwall (2002) posits that in this sense, political space is not only something taken up, assumed or filled, but something that can be created, opened and reshaped. Thus, the notion of 'policy space' evokes sites shaped through the exercise of agency, in which different actors, knowledges and interests interact and in which room can be made for alternatives, but from which some people and ideas remain excluded (ibid).

Spaces may be provided for by the state, and in some cases, they are backed by legal or constitutional guarantees and are regarded by state actors as arenas into which citizens and their representatives are invited. Sutton (2009) and Wolmer (2006) explain that the notion of 'policy space' relates to the extent to which a policy maker is restricted to decision-making by forces such as the opinions of a dominant actor or network. Gaventa (2006), articulates that spaces for participation are not neutral, but are themselves shaped by power relations, which both surround and enter them (see also Gaventa 2005). Inherent also in the idea of spaces is the 'imagery' of boundary. The notion of boundaries suggests that there are actors who designate boundaries and include or exclude certain features. According to Gaventa (2006) power relations help to shape the boundaries of participatory spaces, what is possible within them and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests.

Cornwall and Coelho (2007) explain that to make sense of participation in any given space, then we need also to make sense of the power relations that permeate and produce the spaces. This is because power defined as a network of social boundaries that delimit the field of what is possible for all actors (Hayward, 1998), does not only influence whether actors behave as they want and determine whether they want to participate in politics to express their preferences, but it also shapes the ways in which these actors perceive their wants, desires and interests. In short, power defines the field of possibility as it facilitates and constrains social action. Cornwall (2002) also highlighting the effect of power explains that just because a space is present, does not mean that it will be filled equally with all voices. In fact, participation in spaces can be used for a lot of purposes, sometimes to bring about real change, but at other times simply to legitimate decisions that have been made elsewhere, or to give the illusion of participation, or for symbolic or group building purposes. Accordingly, this is why when looking at spaces it is also helpful to look at the forms of power within them. Gaventa (2006) summarizes how power operates in what he calls the ‘Power Cube’. The argument here is that the power cube can be used to examine the multiple forms, levels and spaces of power, and the ways in which these interact.

As explained by Gaventa (2006), the concerns with how and by whom the spaces of participation are shaped intersect well with debates on the places, or levels where critical social, economic power resides. Indeed, much of the work on public spaces for participation involves the context between local, national and global arenas as locations of power. According to Gaventa (2020), globalization and new forms of global governance have created a wide array of formal and informal, state and non-state spaces for participation and influence at levels beyond the nation-state. On this note, Jones (2019) also looking at the levels of participation, argues that there are various ways of marking boundaries within which policy is made, such as local, national and international arenas.

The actors involved, relevant institutions and prevailing discourses will significantly differ according to each of these. Over and above, there are also likely to be complex interactions and power relations between each level—for example, with the notion of decentralization, the belief is the *bottom-up approach* where participatory practice must begin locally. Jones (2009) also argues that the knowledge-policy dynamics at

different levels, say, that of multilateral organizations, emphasizes the complexity of such processes and the value of engaging with them through the right networks.

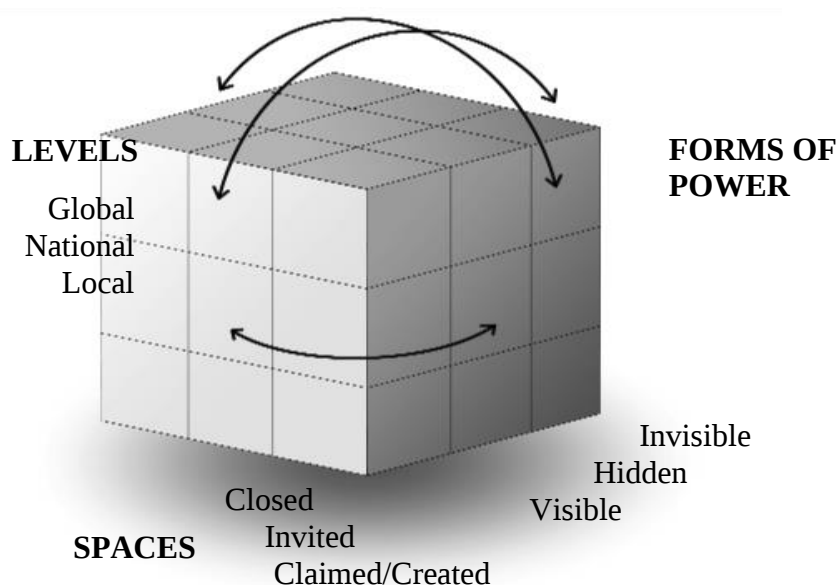


Figure 2: The Power Cube. *Adapted from Gaventa (2006), page 25*

Other analyses as argued by Gaventa (2006), suggest that power is shifting to globalized actors and there are important debates on the role of the nation state and the links to the local level through decentralization. At the international level, there are formal institutions such as those associated with the United Nations (UN), the World Bank or the IMF, meetings associated with global agreements and treaties, such as those on climate, and a host of consultative spaces for participation. Increasingly, supra-national authority is also held in regional bodies such as the African Union, the European Union, regional trade regimes or regional networks. Other powerful bodies include private sector networks and informal networks of international NGOs (Gaventa et al., 2009). Indeed, these institutions affect the domestic public policies of different countries either directly or indirectly.

Despite the growing importance of supra-national bodies of international or regional governance, many argue that the national government still offers the critical entry point for change. Surely, it is national governments that often officially represents citizens in global governance arenas, or who can decide whether or not to implement international treaties (Gaventa 2006). For example, the United States during the Bush administration declared that they had ‘no interest’ in implementing the Kyoto Treaty

limiting greenhouse gas emissions (Gastal, 2007). Notwithstanding, Mayer (2008) argues that in most developing countries supranational bodies of international or regional governance restrict the sovereignty of nation states to make their own policy decisions. In fact, there are economic or military sanctions that are applied if nation states fail to implement what was agreed in a treaty (Howlett et al., 2009). This therefore means that the way supranational bodies affect policy space differs by country and the type of integration. However discussed, international intercourse and the associated stronger impact of foreign factors on nation states have in many instances weakened the effectiveness of domestic policies (Mayer, 2008).

In many contexts, subnational decision-making arenas are critical points of leverage for holding and challenging power. Gaventa et al. (2009) citing United States of America and India as examples of federal systems explain that in these countries, state level governments are very important actors, with their own decision-making bodies as well. Further to that, in most countries programs of decentralization have also made the local level very important both through local government programs, as well as a host of other structures for participation in development projects and service delivery (see Hussein, 2013; Chiweza, 2007; Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2007). Strategies for participation in local governance have been very important for planning, allocating and monitoring budgets and holding local institutions to account. Equally important, local level non-governmental bodies are also important for change (Gaventa, 2020). In other countries like Malawi though, local arenas for decision making (local government councils in particular) largely depend financially on donors and the central government for their survival, and there are instances in which donor organization champion implementation of certain programs as a precondition to aid (see Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2007; Chiweza 2007).

Gaventa (2006) also argues that the ways in which spaces are created also play a crucial role in explaining what is possible within them and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests. Spaces may be closed, which means that decisions are made by a set of actors behind closed doors, without any pretense of broadening the boundaries for inclusion. Closed spaces are where elites such as politicians, bureaucrats, experts, bosses, managers and leaders make decisions with little consultation or involvement (Gaventa, 2020; 2006; 2005). Another way of conceiving

these spaces is as ‘provided’ spaces in the sense that the elites make decisions and provide services to the people without the need for broader consultation or involvement (Gaventa, 2006). Closed spaces often involve issues like trade, macro-economic and finance policies, military policies and so on, which have a great deal of impact on people’s lives but which are considered off-limits for public participation (Gaventa et al., 2009). In some societies and countries, especially those with long histories of authoritarian rule, closed spaces can be quite dominant, yet they also exist in strongly so-called democracies as well. Closed spaces also exist, and often predominate in work places, organizations and social movements, as well as in political institutions (Gaventa, 2020).

In many societies and governments, demands for participation have created new opportunities for involvement and consultation, usually through ‘invitation’ from various authorities, be they government, supra-national agencies or NGOs (Gaventa, 2006; 2005). Invited spaces may be regularized, that they are institutionalized and ongoing, such as those found in legally constituted participatory fora, or more transient through one-off consultations. Cornwall and Coelho (2007) explain, as invited spaces, the institutions of the participatory sphere are framed by those who create them, and infused with power relations and cultures of interaction carried into them from other spaces. Gaventa (2005) says that these are spaces of power, and forms of overt or tacit domination to silence certain actions or keep them from entering at all. Furthermore, these are also spaces of possibility, in which power takes a more productive and positive form: whether in enabling citizens to transgress positions as passive recipients and assert their rights or in contestation over ‘governmentality’ (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). A good example in Malawi on invited spaces, is the budget preparation sessions where the Minister responsible solicit ideas from the general public, however it is not everyone who gets invited. Invited spaces, with the growth of participatory governance can be seen at every level—from local to national policy or even global forums, and even within organizations and workplaces as well (Gaventa et al., 2009).

According to Gaventa (2005), while much emphasis on citizen action and participation is on how to open up closed spaces or to participate effectively with authorities in invited spaces, in any society, there are always examples of spaces for

participation which relatively powerless or excluded groups create for themselves (see also Gaventa et al., 2009). According to Cornwall (2002), these are ‘organic’ spaces which emerge out of sets of common concerns or identifications and may come into being as a result of popular mobilization, such as around identity or issue-based concerns, or may consist of spaces in which like-minded people join together in common pursuits. Other work talks of these spaces as ‘third spaces’ where social actors reject hegemonic space and create spaces for themselves (see also Gaventa et al., 2009; Gaventa 2006; 2005). It is further argued that sometimes even the created spaces may also be the ones that are created as forms or places of resistance from powerful actors, and may also be made hidden or invisible to them (Gaventa et al., 2009).

However, it must be noted that closed, invited and created spaces are not the only spaces because the critical kinds of spaces will vary across context and historical settings. According to Gaventa (2006), in various applications and uses, many other terminologies such as ‘conquered’, ‘instigated’ or ‘initiated’ spaces have been added to the continuum explained above. Furthermore, Jones (2009) citing KNOTS categorizes spaces according to their functions in the policy process. It is explained that there are: conceptual spaces (where ideas are introduced); bureaucratic spaces (formal policymaking led by civil servants); invited spaces (such as consultancies); popular spaces (such as protests and social movements); practical spaces (providing opportunities for ‘witnessing’ by policy makers; and political or electoral spaces (elections).

Gaventa (2006) also argues that in as far as policy spaces are concerned, the terminology attached thereto is of less importance, rather what is critical is who creates the space—those who create it are more likely to have power within it, and those who have power in one, may not have so much power in another. In addition, these spaces also exist in dynamic relationship to one another, and are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transformation. In this sense, closed spaces may seek to restore legitimacy by creating invited spaces, similarly, invited spaces may be created from the other direction as more autonomous people’s movements attempt to use their own fora for engagement with the state. Likewise, power gained in one space, through skills, capacity and

experience, can be used to enter and affect other spaces (ibid). To this end, the transformative potential of spaces for participatory governance must always be assessed in relationship to the other spaces which surround them (Gaventa, 2006; 2005).

Power is increasingly seen as a multi-layered and multi-polar, that is, it is found across various levels and amongst state and non-state actors (Gaventa et al., 2009). In examining the relationship of place and space vis-à-vis participation, the dynamics of power that shape the inclusiveness of participation must also be looked into. The argument here is that power is concerned with the degree to which conflict over key issues and the voices of key actors are visible in given spaces and places (Gaventa, 2006). To this end, Gaventa (2005) citing VeneKlasen and Miller distinguish between visible, hidden and invisible (internalized) forms of power. Gaventa et al. (2009) highlight that visible forms of power are contests over interests which are visible in public spaces or formal decision-making bodies. Often these refer to political bodies, local councils or consultative forums. However, they can equally apply to the decision-making arenas of organizations and even social movements or other spaces for collective action. The assumption is that access to these decision-making arenas by relatively powerless groups is relatively open. That is, those with grievances are able to articulate them in the formal decision-making process and participate fully in the deliberations within them. Organizations and decision-making structures are considered accessible by all, so power is understood by only looking at them. Another assumption is that by seeing who participates, who wins and who loses in these arenas, one can tell who has power. For example, it is possible to analyze which interests are able to maintain debate, whose interests are present, but have little influence.

Hidden forms of power are used by vested interests to maintain their power and privilege by creating barriers to participation, by excluding key issues from the public arena or by controlling politics 'backstage'. They may occur not only in political processes but in organizations and other group contexts as well, such as workplaces and NGOs or community-based organizations. Through hidden forms of power, alternative choices are limited, less powerful groups and/or individuals and their concerns are excluded, and the rules of the game are set to be biased against certain

people and issues. Gaventa et al. (2009) say that academics have described this form of power as the ‘mobilization of bias’, where some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out. This is done by dominant rules and procedures, the framing of issues is in a way that devalues them, there is use of threat or sanctions, and the discrediting of legitimacy of actors who are challenging the status quo.

It is argued by Gaventa et al. (2009) that invisible power goes a step further than hidden power as it involves the ways in which the awareness of one’s rights and interests are hidden through the adoption of dominating ideologies, values and forms of behavior by relatively powerless groups themselves (see also Gaventa 2006; 2005). In this form of power, people may be unaware of their rights and their ability to speak out, and may come to see various forms of power or domination over them as ‘natural’, or at least unchangeable, and therefore unquestioned (Gaventa et al., 2009). Poor people, for instance, may accent their circumstances as the status quo even in the face of inequalities around them, internalizing dominant explanations of poverty that tell them poverty is their fault rather than a systemic problem. In other words, in the invisible power there is a ‘culture of silence’ resulting from the internalization of oppression and people have a false consciousness.

Concisely, the power cube presents a dynamic understanding of how power operates, how different interests can be marginalized from decision making, and the strategies needed to increase inclusion (Luttrell et al., 2007). Indeed, the power cube describes how power is used by the powerful across three continuums of **spaces**, **places** and **power**. Thus, the power cube helps in explaining the different forms of spaces (closed, invited and claimed), it also distinguishes the degree of power and it emphasizes the importance of understanding the levels of power and the places of engagement (the international, national and local levels or places).

2.2.9 Political Strategies for Agenda Setting

The process of agenda setting is a critical moment in the production of public policies, it has great impact on policy production and the results to be achieved. It is highlighted that in most communities, the number of potential public issues far exceeds the capabilities of decision-making institution to process them. In this sense, issues or their proponents must consequently compete for a place on the decision-

making agenda (Cobb et al., 1976). Thus, all communities must decide which issues will be the concern of decision-makers. This is a question of power because it involves defining subjects that will be the focus of policymakers' attention, as well as the choices that will be made later throughout the decision-making process (Capella, 2016). Princen (2011) highlights that agenda setting is about having an issue considered by policy-makers. Thus, for policy actors, agenda setting is an important part of the policy-making process because getting an issue considered is a precondition for decision making; only when an issue is being considered is there a chance that some decision on that issue will be taken. Therefore, agenda-setting is an important element of the strategies that political actors pursue.

The dynamics of participation in policymaking processes are crucially mediated by institutional factors. Policy is made in institutional arenas or in the terminology of Baumgartner and Jones (1993), 'venues.' According to Princen (2011), two broad strategies are possible: venue shopping and venue modification. Venue strategies are identified as one possible way of manipulating time and space within a policy stream. Venue shopping refers to the idea that policymakers seek to avoid obstacles to the realization of their policy preferences by looking for new policy venues that appear more favorable to the attainment of their goals (Kaunert et al., 2013). Venue shopping may occur between institutions (horizontal venue shopping) and between different levels in a multi-level system (vertical venue shopping). On the one hand, the horizontal array looks across branches of government within a given level, or across subunits within a given branch of government. On the other hand, the vertical looks at the levels up and down a system (Holyoke et al., 2008). It is argued that by choosing the places where the policy game is played out (venue shopping), policy actors attempt to secure most favorable conditions for advancing a specific policy solution (Brouwer & Biermann, 2011).

Venue shopping, whether horizontal or vertical takes place among pre-existing venues. If a suitable venue is not available, actors may sometimes modify the range of available venues in order to create one that is better suited to their purposes (Princen, 2011). For example, rather than creating an entirely new venue, those in positions of authority like the President (as a policy actor) can change the *modus operandi* of the existing venues in order to increase or reduce the likelihood of taking up an issue.

This may include such basic but crucial decisions as the frequency within which groups in the policymaking process meet or the allocation of available meeting rooms.

In addition to mobilizing supporters, prospective agenda-setters need to frame an issue in such a way that it arouses interest (Princen, 2011). This may be through ‘big words’ and through ‘small steps.’ Framing through big words consists of tying an issue with established overall values that are held to be central to a nation’s or organization’s purpose and identity. For example, policy actors can frame conflict prevention as a humanitarian issue, since conflicts are detrimental to economic and social development. A closely related strategy is to tie in with stated policy priorities and commitments. Issues can also profit from focusing events that allow for reframing. For example, as attacks against people with albinism hit the nation, as a human rights issue, the plan was to address the root causes of these attacks. This included an awareness-raising campaign, strengthened investigations and prosecutions, together with strengthened protection and victim assistance measures (Mwale, 2019).

However, using the ‘big words’ is not the only way in which an issue can gain attention among policymakers. For other issues, for which the link with overarching values cannot be made so convincingly, an alternative strategy is to build up interests through ‘small steps.’ This strategy works best for issues that have a significant moral component and/or which carry important symbolic meanings. Thus, rather than highlighting fundamental values or overarching policy priorities, this strategy stresses apparent ‘technical’ aspects of an issue and gradually builds up support for policies in a certain area (Princen, 2011). There are several types of small steps that can be taken, often in conjunction. One way to start a debate on an issue is to do a study, and from these studies further steps could be taken. Another way to bring an issue to the attention of policymakers is to organize conferences. Policy actors often hold conferences or informal ministerial meetings in order to highlight issues they find important. Furthermore, a more substantive ‘smaller step’ strategy consists on focusing on specific non-controversial elements or target groups.

When an issue is new its proponents face the challenge of building up sufficient organizational capacity to deal with it. This entails that the actors’ involvement will not be credible and if other venues are available they might lose venue of choice to

deal with the issue. Capacity building takes place both within and outside. It is articulated by Princen (2011) that outside networks offer useful input for policymaking. Moreover, over time they may also develop into internal level policy communities that facilitate the receptiveness to issues once they are formally introduced on the agenda.

In addition to capacity building, building credibility also involves constructing a story about why an issue is in the scope it is. It is noted that for some issues this requires little effort, either because they are cross-cutting or because there has been a longstanding involvement. Yet for other issues, claiming authority is a challenge in its own right, for which different strategies can be used. On this note (Princen, 2011) says that linking an issue to established policies is a practical way of claiming authority, both legally and politically. This can be done by showing that an issue where an organization has no or little authority really falls on another issue area over which it has authority, then it follows almost automatically that the organization is entitled to deal with it. Another way is the identification of common problems, for example, in regional bodies like the European Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states benefit if they tackle an issues(s) together as something that is common among them.

Coalition building strategies have also been described as one of the most important tools that policy actors use to reduce the influence of opposition, and in some cases actively shape policy arenas and make strategic use of time in the policy process (Brouwer & Biermann, 2011). Policy actors build coalitions and alliances to mobilize the strength and resources they need to make their solutions viable. Policy actors sometimes opt for broad coalitions when disseminating their ideas, but at other times small groups of closed networks in order to exclude unwanted opposition. This indicates that they can influence and access structure within a policy stream (ibid). There is also another factor which policy actors can manipulate, by either slowing down or speeding up the policy-formulation process. Brouwer and Biermann (2011) mention the strategic use of deadlines to slow down policy processes, and strategic choices of when to include stakeholders, as examples of timing strategies used by policy actors. Another strategy aimed at manipulating time is what Zahariadis (2003)

call ‘salami’ tactics—policy actors’ activities that slice decision-making into distinct stages to enhance the ‘chances of agreement’ in a step-by-step process.

Brouwer and Biermann (2011) also explain that political organizations reflect the exercise of power through the allocation of attention in a political system as some conflicts are exploited, while others are suppressed by being kept off the agenda. To this end, Brouwer and Biermann (2011) explain that of particular importance is the distinction between three types of organizational structures: open structures (with unsegmented access from problems, solutions and participants); specialized structures (where a limited number of participants have legitimate access to the decision arena); and hierarchical structures (where important decision-makers have access to more arenas than do less important ones).

2.2.10 Institutions and Policy Processes

People do one thing and not another due to the presence of certain social constructs, that is, ideas, beliefs, norms, identities, or some other interpretive filters through which they perceive the world. Indeed, in this context, March and Olsen (2006) define an institution as a relative enduring collection of rules and organizational practices, embedded in the structures of meaning and resources that are relatively resistant to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and outside circumstances. Drawing from this perspective, institutions guide people’s behavior but they are also more stable than other means of social control as they do not undergo rapid changes. In other words, institutions are rigid and they are relatively permanent (Pecorella, 2019). While institutions serve as filters through which people see the world, and as venues where policy actors interpret and seek to impact societies, it has to be noted that they are not neutral. They are good for some people and bad for others depending on who has the power to impose their will (Moe, 2005).

North (1991) also defines ‘*institutions*’ as the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. In this sense, they consist of both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws and property rights). North (1991) further argues that institutions and the effectiveness of enforcement (together with the technology employed) determine the cost of transacting. Thus, effective institutions raise the

benefits of cooperative solutions or the costs of defection. Both political and economic institutions are essential parts of an effective institutional matrix. According to Jones (2009), institutions explain an ongoing force behind policymaking as they shape the parameters of formal and informal ‘rules of the game’ such as constitutional rules and cultural norms.

Anyebe (2018) explains that traditionally, the institutional approach concentrates on describing the formal and legal aspects of government institutions: their formal structure, legal powers, procedural rules, and functions (see also Dye 2014). In this sense, an institution is in part a set of regularized patterns of human behavior that persist overtime and pattern some significant social function. Accordingly, it is their differing patterns of behavior that usually distinguish courts from legislatures, from administrative agencies and so on. The regularized patterns of behavior (institutions) can affect decision-making and the context of public policy. Jones (2009) posits that by defining who is able to participate in different decision-making processes, institutions shape actors’ strategies and influence what actors believe to be possible and desirable. Thus, rules structure the policy process and the political behavior of policy actors. Anyebe (2018) argues that rules and structural arrangements are usually not neutral in their effects; rather they tend to favor some interests in society over others and some policy results over others.

Furthermore, a number of factors in the socio-economic, political and cultural environment crucially shape policy processes, for example, the extent of democracy ad political freedoms, the level of centralization (or decentralization), a climate of rationality and academic and media freedom (Jones, 2003). It is further put forward by Jones (2009) that the historical dimension of institutions explains how well-established programs generate political constraints and opportunities, and how previously enacted policies impact on future courses of action generating path dependency (see also Dye 2014; Howlett et al., 2009). To this end, formal and informal institutions affect which ideas and whose knowledge is used in the policy process, the degree of openness of various actors to certain ideas, and the kind of channels. According to Jones (2003) this means that ideas are ‘refracted’ or altered as they travel through the policy process to fit in with the prevailing institutions. In this way, it is evident that institutions keep certain issues off the agenda.

Knowledge, beliefs and ideas can become institutionalized, that is, embedded in law or within bureaucratic procedures, programs and departments—this also creates constituencies who defend the ideas if needed (Jones, 2003). Over and above that, institutions are also likely to influence the interface between knowledge and policy directly or indirectly by influencing knowledge generation. Jones (2003) also explains that political institutions can commission research to investigate policy problems, and more generally providing funding for research in line with priorities.

2.2.11 Some Significant Institutions and Institutional Reforms in Malawi's Energy Sector

Energy demand in developing countries is rapidly increasing to support economic growth, reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity (IRENA, 2021, Lawal et al., 2020). However, as recorded by Barnes et al. (1997), in most developing countries inadequate energy markets threaten to dampen economic growth, hobble development and keep living standards low. On this note, Scott (2015) also argues that the quality of Africa's energy is poor as it is characterized by underinvestment in the power sector, creating a deficit in supply that result in frequent power outages. Accordingly, the economic impact of unreliable electricity is felt through lost or reduced output, lower productivity and higher cost of electricity for consumers. Indeed, drawing from IRENA (2021), improving the reliability of electricity supplies by expanding generation capacity and investing in transmission can reverse the situation (see also Scott, 2015). On this account, Barnes et al. (1997), record that although grid expansion is the traditional means of providing electricity supplies, connection to distant grids may be too expensive to be cost effective for many governments. Fortunately, there are a number of promising alternatives of increasing energy supplies even in remote areas, ranging from more efficient use of traditional fuels to advanced technologies based on renewable energies (ibid). In this case, following either path to expand energy access in developing countries entails having in place 'rules of the game' to regulate and guide on the sustainable use of the environment as well as to enhance the adoption of renewables (IRENA, 2018).

It is argued by Stephens (2019) that the penetration of renewables may face competition because electricity governance has historically been dominated by the

incumbent centralized generators, suppliers, transmission and distribution grid owners or system operators who would like to maintain the status quo as energy transitions impose adjustment costs, creating economic losers and winners (see also Strunz et al., 2015). On a related note, Marion et al. (2016) also explain that fossil fuels enjoy tremendous advantages over less mature, sustainable alternatives such as solar and wind because centuries of industrial development have depended on these fuel sources. Consequently, (Brunnschweiler, 2010) highlights that discussions on energy transitions should be considered within countries' institutional characteristics because renewable energy projects like any other investments, benefit from general political stability, sound regulatory frameworks, effective governance, and secure property rights. Scholten (2009) also explains that energy transitions are not simply a matter of technical and economic aspects, they also involve institutions. The argument here is that institutions suitable for an earlier set of fundamental technologies may be quite inappropriate for the new. Indeed, history is full of examples where existing institutional structures pose an obstacle to the success of new technologies which require reforms if development is to be realized effectively (North, 1990). Strikingly, Laurentis and Pearson (2021) articulate that historical rules and institutions tend to favor centralized electricity infrastructures and land use, as well as infrastructure imaginaries related to energy security priorities. Institutions also affect the energy sector partly by framing or reframing debates around the deployment of new energy sources and their potential contributions (ibid). Kainiemi et al. (2020) also say that institutions might also influence policy actors' ability to take part in energy governance. This is to say that while actors may seek to influence the structures around them, they might also be constrained by those same structures.

Energy being the linchpin of the economy, there needs to be rules of the game to guide its governance for national as well as global prosperity. In Malawi, energy policy is determined by a number of key policy documents representing wider areas of the 'enabling environment' that links the energy policy into the MGDS. Accordingly, this stresses how important energy is toward achieving national development (Taalo et al., 2015). Frame et al. (2013), explain that the energy sector in Malawi is broadly governed by the Environmental Management Act and the Energy Regulatory Act. The legal framework also consists of sector specific Acts, and these include; the Electricity Act, Rural Electrification Act, Forestry Act, Petroleum

(Exploration and Production Act), Atomic Energy Act, and the Liquid Fuels and Gas (Production and Supply) Act.

The Electricity Act sets out the institutional environment of the energy sector in Malawi. Thus, it underlines the official and authoritative feature of government arrangement in terms of policy subsystems in the energy sector. In other words, the Act, *inter alia*, make provisions for the regulation of generation, transmission, wheeling distribution, sale, importation and exportation, use and safety of electricity (GoM, 2004a). In other words, the Electricity Act lays a legal framework within which energy concerns can be addressed to unlock the country's development potential and it expressly pronounces what is expected from different stakeholders in terms of licences, tariffs, transmission and power sales, generation, distribution, and land rights. The Act also highlights the importance of environmental protection as efforts are being made *vis a vis* energy concerns (GoM, 2004a).

The notion of environmental management is based on efforts to protect the existing natural resources and natural environment. As a matter of fact, in terms of biomass energy or traditional fuels, the Forestry Act in Malawi aims at checking against deforestation which is occurring progressively due to fuelwood harvesting that satisfies the bulk of energy needs in rural and urban areas. Thus, the Act aims at conserving, establishing, protecting and managing trees and forests for the sustainable development of the country (GoM, 1997). From a regulatory perspective, the Energy Regulatory Act of 2004, established the Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA) with a mandate to regulate the energy sector in Malawi. In this regard, the Authority intervening in market forces of demand and supply, determine levels of investment in, as well as the production and consumption of energy (Girdis & Hoskote, 2005). In other words, the Authority sets the regulatory framework that enable service providers to get a reasonable return on their investment, while providing consumers with high quality service at a fair price (GoM, 2004a). It can also be said that the Authority works toward lowering transaction costs as it sets incentives for market participants to compete on price and quality (Girdis & Hoskote). On this note, the database maintained by MERA can be regarded as a key tool with which market players enhance their knowledge about present and (expected) future national energy consumption levels, thus fostering planning security.

According to Peters and Sievert (2015), the majority of un-electrified households are deep in rural areas necessitating, in their argument, government responsibility for ensuring the electrification of all its citizens, and especially the rural poor to improve living conditions. To this effect, in order to address the issue of energy poverty and cut down on the unsustainable use of biomass fuel, the government through the Rural Electrification Act can provide electricity services to rural areas through grid extensions or off-grid solutions (Girdis & Hoskote, 2005). Accordingly, the Rural Electrification Act in Malawi provides for the promotion, funding, management and regulation of rural electrification (GoM, 2004b). Thus, it lays down an institutional framework within which the government and/or its agencies can work with in their pursuit of providing electricity access to remote and rural areas that often suffer from insufficient grid access. However explained, Wamukonya (2005) shows that it is becoming increasingly evident that rural electrification is not financially attractive and hence can only be taken by the public or with public sector assistance. Indeed, on this account, it is reported by Girdis and Hoskote (2005), that as is the case elsewhere, the government of Malawi takes a prominent role in articulating a rural electrification policy and implementation. To this extent, rural electrification in Malawi has one developer (the state), one technical solution (grid extension) and one operator (ESCOM) and one uniform and low tariff nationwide. Consequently, this might explain why rural electrification has made little headway over the years (Girdis & Hoskote, 2005).

Reliable and cost-effective electricity is fundamental for driving economic growth and socio-economic development in modern economies. However, the tenacity of current energy structures and/or changes thereof are important determinants of the energy systems' ability to meet such goals (Kainiemi et al., 2020). To this end, it is therefore imperative that the limitations and inefficiencies of the incumbent institutional model of electricity supply should be reformed (Sen et al., 2016). According to Sen et al. (2016) OECD countries were earliest adopters of power sector reforms and drivers for reform were predominantly to introduce competition, increase efficiencies, and reduce end-user costs, generally within the context of excess generation capacity and stable institutions. Unlike in OECD countries, power sector reforms in non-OECD countries were mostly characterized by severe electricity supply shortages, poor performance levels, high levels of public debt, weak

institutional capacity and unstable political contexts (Eberhard & Godinho, 2017; Sen et al., 2016). It is also argued by Sen et al. (2016) that in these contexts, reforms were often championed by multilateral donors and were sometimes part of structural adjustment packages to access donor funding.

In Africa, power sector reforms have been implemented to various degrees across the countries. Wamukonya (2005), highlights that the typical reform model involves corporatization, commercialization, restructuring and eventually privatization and competition. In Malawi, an outdated and inadequate legal and regulatory framework did not provide investors with sufficient clarity and incentives on how to invest in the energy market. Furthermore, there was underperformance at ESCOM characterized by lack of modern management practices, confusing governance and reporting lines that led to operations driven more by political considerations than commercial factors. To this end, the power sector reform needed to look beyond infrastructure and take a more holistic approach to promote future growth and sustainability. According to the MCC report of 2021, the objective of the power sector reform was to create an enabling environment for future expansion of the power sector by strengthening sector institutions and enhancing regulation and governance of the sector.

As part of the power sector reforms, Malawi amended its electricity laws. It is explained by (Kachaje et al., 2017) that the amendment of the electricity laws usually involves the Parliament of a country passing an amendment to the existing Act to establish new legislation governing the electricity sector and/or other energy sub-sectors. It is further argued by Kachaje et al. (2017) that among other things, the changes in the legal and regulatory framework transformed the terrain of the energy sector. For example, in an effort to increase supply of quality electricity in the country the 2016 Electricity Act provides for establishment of IPPs. Thus, it removes the monopoly of the national utility, which has been a major barrier to private sector participation. Furthermore, in other instances, the amendment also provides for the establishment of an independent regulatory body for the electricity sector and defines its roles (GoM, 2004a).

The Electricity Act can also create a provision for rural electrification program and/or fund. For instance, in Malawi, the Malawi Rural Electrification Programme (MAREP) aims at extending power distribution lines to district administration centers, major

trading centers, and tobacco growing areas. The programme has also seen the development of a 4.5-Megawatt Wovwe Hydro Electric Power Plant. Clearly, it can be concluded that the objective of MAREP is to increase access to electricity for people in peri urban and rural areas as part of Government's efforts to reduce poverty, transform rural economies, improve productivity and improve the quality of social services according to the Rural Electrification Act, 2004. By and large, the Rural Electrification Fund is the main source of funding for MAREP activities. Other sources of funds include rural electrification levies on energy sales, grants, gifts and donations by the government, foreign governments, international agencies or other external body of persons, *et cetera* (GoM, 2004b).

It is recorded by IRENA and AfDB (2022) that for many people in Africa, access to affordable, clean and sustainable energy remains an aspiration. However argued, attracting private investors in the energy sector in most developing countries has been difficult largely due to the low levels of infrastructural development and customer base (Wamukonya, 2005). On a related note, Gonenc et al. (2000) explain that energy markets typically exhibit structural characteristics that allow the incumbent firms to exercise market dominance, which restricts competition and potentially generate higher prices and reduced consumer protection. It is argued by IRENA and AfDB (2022) that in an effort to correct this, there has to be a sophisticated understanding of the intimate connections between the energy system and the economy at large. Thus, it is important that governments design policies that create a favorable environment for private sector investments in the power sector (MCC, 2021). Indeed, it can be argued that the restructuring or unbundling of ESCOM has led to a significant change in the structure of the energy market as the state monopoly has been dismantled. Drawing from arguments by Kachaje et al. (2017) and MCC (2021), this makes sense as the incumbent utility was struggling to raise capital for new investments. Surely, the unbundling opened a platform for private sector participation in the energy sector while at the same time offering competition to the state-owned utility. Indeed, on this note (Morrison, 2022) argue that unbundling increases opportunities for competition as the unbundled generation entity is expected to compete with private sector led independent power producers (IPPs). In this case, competition in technology investments may lead to more efficient energy production, thus, increasing security of supply. Further to that, it may also be argued that separating transmission from the

other components of the electricity supply industry removed conflict of interests that may occur in state-owned utilities, for example, in cases where the state-owned utility is generating its own power, while also being a single buyer from IPPs.

Generally, most reforms in Africa have been preceded by an amendment of the electricity law to allow for change in utility structure and management. In this context, Wamukonya (2005) explains that the unbundling of state-owned utilities into generation, transmission and distribution leaves ownership and management under state control with private participation occurring through IPPs. Eberhard et al. (2011) explain that IPPs are private entities and they own or operate electricity generation and sell to a utility, a central government buyer, and/or end users depending on the business model, offering a viable opportunity to meet the gap in energy demand and supply. Notwithstanding, barriers may exist that constrain the development of renewable energy sources and IPP participation in the power sector. On this note, a coherent and practical IPP framework is vital to addressing such issues and provide guidance to facilitate the development of the power sector. Accordingly, the IPP Framework in Malawi provides interested parties with a clear understanding of how to invest in Malawi's power sector. It is explained that this is a commitment of the Government and other stakeholders to establish a clear robust process for securing investment in the power sector that balances the interests of consumers for cost-effective, reliable power supply with the commercial interests of private investors (GoM, 2017). Surely, it may be argued that along with the unbundling of ESCOM, the IPP framework is an effort toward leveling the playing field to accommodate private investors in the power sector in Malawi.

It is highlighted that for one to understand the IPP framework in Malawi, the same has to be scrutinized in the context of relevant policy and legislation. For example, the IPP framework depends on the amendments of the Electricity Act, 2004. Noticeably, in the Electricity Act of 2016, the amendments that were made, among other things, provided for private sector participation and it also enabled the unbundling of ESCOM. Further to that, the Energy Regulatory Act (2004) provides the legislative framework promulgating the role and functions of MERA. One underlined importance in this, is MERA's role issuing generation licenses to IPPs and to set and adjust electricity tariffs (GoM, 2017). It is also explained that the Public Procurement

Act (2003) and Public Procurement Regulations (2004) specifies in detail how publicly owned utilities such as ESCOM and by extension the single buyer should procure electricity (ibid).

Table 1: Key policy and legislative environment supporting the IPP framework

Legislation	Regulatory	Policy and Operational Instruments
The Electricity Act (Electricity Act No. 22 of 2004)	Grid code	Malawi Energy Policy
Electricity (Amendment) Act 2016	Market Rules	Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) and Annual Generation Procurement Plan
Energy Regulatory Act 2004	Generation Licence	Cost Reflective Pricing
Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2003	Public Procurement Regulations (2004)	Credit Enhancement Forex Support

Adapted from the Independent Power Producer (IPP) Framework for Malawi (2017), page 1

Faced with energy transition imperative, governments have to decide about public policy to promote renewable electrical energy production. In developing countries like Malawi, governments are tempted to design deliberate policies to support the development of the energy sector in order to provide electricity to large sections of the population who are not connected to the grid (GoM, 2018). Surely, in this regard, Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) are an important vehicle for attracting private sector capital and debt finance from commercial banks and from public sector finance institutions to develop new generating capacity to provide the power needed for socio-economic development (Wallace, 2019). Jain (2022) defines a PPA as long-term supply agreement between two parties, usually between a power producer and a customer (an electricity consumer or trader). Thus, a PPA defines the conditions of the agreement, such as the amount of electricity to be supplied, negotiated prices, accounting, and penalties for non-compliance. It is a bilateral agreement and can take many forms, and it is usually tailored to the specific application (Ghiassi-Farrokhfal et al., 2021). Accordingly, with the development aspirations of the Malawi government as expressed in the Agenda 2063, this reform was crucial because PPAs are an

effective way of attracting investments in the energy sector by offering long-term guaranteed purchase agreements to IPPs to sell their electricity into the grid.

To a large extent, PPAs are one of the legal mechanisms that are used to introduce greater competitions into newly created electricity markets. The rationale here is that since PPAs mitigate market risks mainly related to energy price fluctuations, this may allow the entry of privately funded generators to compete with the incumbent utility which in most cases struggles to raise capital for new investments (Sweerts et al., 2019; Onyeji-Nwogu, 2017). In addition, it is also articulated by (Wallace, 2019) that PPAs are also a major part of the legal framework used in implementing government policy on environmental protection and on fostering security of supply through diversity of generation and fuel sources. Surely, this normally involves a legislative or regulatory obligation on electricity suppliers to purchase specific amounts of power from specific energy sources. Thus, this process results in renewable generators obtaining PPAs with major suppliers who in turn incorporate the renewable electricity into the mix of power that is used to supply consumers.

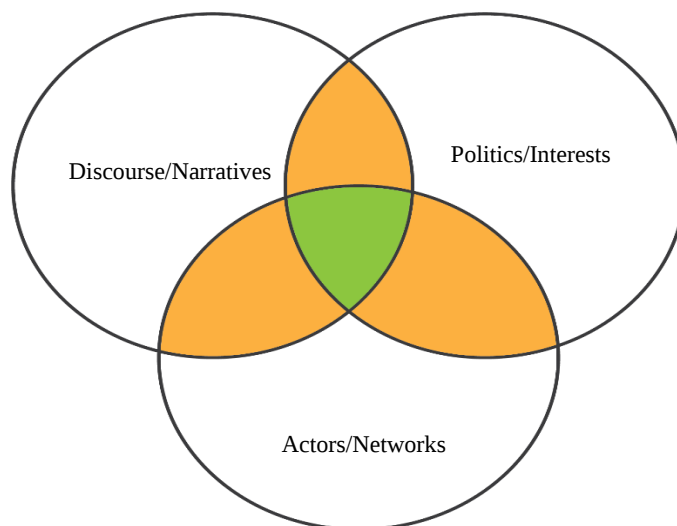
In Malawi, deforestation is a problem as a result of fuel wood harvesting on a diminishing resource base. If deforestation is to be avoided, checking how the bulk of household energy needs in rural and urban areas are met seems crucial. Indeed, Kambewa et al. (2007) explain that while the government has banned charcoal production in woodland areas, this has been largely ignored and there is still an extensive illegal trade in charcoal. Apparently, these activities are largely unchecked and tacitly accepted. Considering that energy cut across a broad array of issues, the new Forestry Act of 2019 is a reform toward sustainable energy production. Indeed, this is a critical point for environmental protection in Malawi. Among other things, the new Act offers a range of increased protections, such as better regulation of charcoal; increased transparency and accountability in the forest sector; better law enforcement; enhanced penalties and fines; and the development of a forest and management fund (GoM, 2019). Already, there is an outcry from the public that the fines are hefty, thus, deterring them from committing an offence related to illegal charcoal businesses.

A successful electricity reform is expected to enhance the efficiency of the sector, improve energy service reliability and service quality, reduce price-cost gap through cost-reflective pricing, and increase investments (Newbery, 2002; Jamasb, 2006). In this regard, it is pointed out by Jamasb et al. (2015) that the structures of the electricity markets have a strong influence on whether and the extent to which reforms can achieve improvements in performance. Apparently, for ESCOM as major stakeholder in the power sector, this called for a need to reform and breakaway from long-held habits that led to persistent low performance. Historically, ESCOM has not been viewed as a risky borrower for financing institutions and by IPPs. However argued, the MCC financed the implementation of ESCOM's turnaround aimed at restoring the institution's financial health and rebuilding the organization into a financially sustainable and well-managed utility (MCC, 2021). It is further argued by The Word Bank (2019) that the MCC also supported ESCOM to introduce stronger operational practices to improve maintenance planning and execution with an aim of reducing high system losses. In addition, ESCOM has standardized and simplified household connections, allowing multiple connections from a master meter, thus, reducing costs (Girdis & Hoskote, 2005). The Corporation has also moved most of its customers from postpaid to prepaid meters as a way of revenue protection (The World Bank, 2019).

It is also explained by MCC (2021) that poor performance at ESCOM was addressed by introducing Management Information Systems (MIS), a state-of-the-art information technology platform that aimed to provide the utility company with the ability to modernize its financial and operational management practices. As expected, the MIS was designed to reduce the scope for error, improve availability of data, and improve efficiency, saving ESCOM and its customers money. Intrigued by the unbundling, ESCOM is expected to perform transmission planning in consultation with IPPs (something which was not there). In essence, this may lead to procurement plans and improved integration in business planning aimed at strengthening the utility's ability to plan and execute maintenance and expansion projects, as grid access is crucial to IPPs' operations. It is further highlighted by MCC (2021) that as part of the reform efforts, ESCOM has also introduced a social tariff with lower rates provided to customers consuming small amounts of electricity, this helps poorer households have opportunities to benefit from electricity services.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Wolmer (2006) posit that there are three broad approaches of understanding policymaking. One emphasizes political economy and the interactions of the state and civil society and interest groups. Another examines the histories and practice linked to shifting discourses, and how these shape and guide policy problems and courses of action. The third gives primacy to the roles and agency (or capacity to make a difference) of individual actors. Accordingly, at the heart of policy processes and policy change is the integration of these different but overlapping perspectives, they explain how actors make and shape policy narratives and interests while being constrained by them at the same time (Wolmer, 2006; Keely & Scoones, 2003; Keely & Scoones, 2000).



To a greater or lesser extent, understanding policy processes comes as a result of looking at all three together— at the intersection of the three overlapping perspectives. Thus, to understand why policies take particular shapes, it is necessary to understand not only the scientific framing of issues—the narratives that tell the policy stories, but also the way policy positions become embedded in networks (of actors, funding, professional and other relationships, and particular institutions and organisations), and the enabling or constraining power dynamics (Wolmer, 2006). Since knowledge and discourse, actors and networks, and politics and interests are at the heart of understanding policy processes, this study adopted the framework as

depicted to simplify rather a more complex picture of the policy process. However argued, it is worth noting that this study sees policymaking as diverse, diffuse, complicated activity, where sometimes competing, sometimes overlapping policy positions are presented by a range of actors. Thus, the framework will help in understanding how policy conflicts emerge, and explore how particular positions get established in (and others excluded from) policy debates, and how, once established such positions get challenged and transformed. In other words, the framework simplifies how policy discourses, actor networks, politics and interests interact with each other and with policy spaces in getting policy positions established.

2.3.1 Theoretical Approaches: Rational Choice Institutionalism and Path Dependence

Political Economy Analysis (PEA) is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between the different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships overtime (DFID, 2009). PEA elucidates how power and resources are distributed and contested in different contexts, and the implications for development outcomes. It gets beneath the formal structures to reveal the underlying interests, incentives, and institutions that enable or frustrate change (Haider & Rao, 2010; DFID, 2009). According to Haider and Rao (2010), such insights are important for advancing challenging agendas around governance, economic growth and service delivery, which experience has shown do not lend themselves to technical solutions alone.

There are an increasing number of political economy tools available to development agencies for a range of analytical and operational purposes. This study however, will use the rational choice institutionalism which marries the ideas from rational choice theory and institutionalism. According to Peters & Pierre (2020), as it is true for all forms of rational choice theory, the assumption here is that individuals are utility maximizers and that they will utilize any situation that maximize that utility. It is argued that no abstract rational actor, whose preferences are simply given, and who acts simply according to interests, has ever existed (Kloppenber, 1993). The argument laid down by rational choice institutionalists is that political life occurs

within institutions (whether formal or informal), and that these institutions are conceptualized as a set of incentives or disincentives for individuals (Peters, 1999). In this sense, institutions are sets of rules that mandate the action or the non-action of policy actors. Thus, institutions espouse the concept of bounded rationality which creates an environment through which all political actors operate.

The study will be guided by this framework because it provides a way of thinking about politics in a systematic way and it offers a method of tracing the dynamics of power relations in policy spaces, policy actors' interests, ideas and narratives which shape policy decisions and outcomes as well as particular practices. In this way, the rational choice institutionalism will be helpful in unearthing incentives and disincentives facing policy actors in renewable energy, and how these actors generate policy outcomes.

The study will also use the path dependence analytical framework which is part of the historical institutionalism school of thought. According to Greener (2005), as a theory path dependence assumes that 'history matters,' and it attempts to explain why institutions change less than might be expected and how this constrains advancement. The argument is that the theory considers institutions as structural variables from which stems the arrangement of ideas, interests and powers which are the focal point of public policies. In this light, institutions contribute to the structuring of public policies by encouraging or constraining organizations, actors and their activities (Steinmo et al., 1992). According to the theory, organizations and actors are part of institutions that structure and channel behavioral standards and activities along established paths. These paths are made up of institutions (values, standards and rules) and public policies determined by previous choices impose constraints on policy processes (Wilsford, 1994). In this way, the notion of dependence in relation to the path taken highlights the historical dynamic that dictates that once a path is chosen, it is difficult to change it because the processes become so institutionalized and reinforced over time. It becomes increasingly difficult to reverse past institutional choices because not following the rules and standards established by previous choices generate costs in terms of investment, learning, coordination and anticipation. That is why existing institutions are modified and not replaced despite their less than optimal nature, and institutional inertia is generated (Wilsford, 1994; David, 1989).

The theory will guide this study in the sense that human behavior has limits, both cognitive and institutional, which have profound implications for politics and decision-making in general. The rationale behind choosing dependence theory is that it will help the researcher to understand and interpret how path dependence influence strategies of policy actors, their ideas, narratives, and interests and how these in return contribute to reluctance or inability to invest in renewable energy development in Malawi, and also how institutions are to some extent insulated from change and how these incentivize or disincentivize policy actors toward action or inaction in promoting renewable energy in the country.

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this section was to provide a conceptual and informative review of the literature on policy processes. Although the idea of policymaking as a set of interrelated stages provides a general framework for understanding the policy development process, the reality of policymaking is not as systematic and linear as the model might suggest. Policy issues are interconnected, policy makers fumble around for solutions in the context of great uncertainty and many internal and external constraints. Often what was done in the past has a determining effect on how issues are processed. To this end, the section presented the policy and political context in Malawi, an overview of the policy processes, different theories and models which try to explain how the machinery of government makes policy, different energy policy actors and a range of competing values, ideas, narratives and interests in the policy process. This section has also reviewed literature on politics and power because policymaking is more than a step-by-step process as it is often simply understood. In this regard, some literature focused on policy networks, policy communities, discourses and institution as these reveals the underlying interests that determine what is organized into politics and what is organized out. However, what lacks in this literature is a focus on how renewable energy is a key site of political-economic contest in Malawi, thus, influencing the success or failure to adopt policies in this sector. A gap which this study seeks to fill. This section has also highlighted the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that this study will adopt.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following section outlines and justifies the methods used to conduct the research in order to derive accurate results. It also describes the whole research design, brief description of the respondents, and methods used to collect data. Finally, it describes how the data was analysed.

3.2 Proposed Methods of Investigation

According to Goundar (2012), it is the nature of the problem ‘per se’ which influences the choice of a specific research methodology. This study adopted a qualitative approach to collect more information and get a deeper understanding and multiple interpretations on how politics of policy processes influence the narratives of the actors involved, their strategies, resources, and how institutions as in ‘rules of the game’ affect the promotion of renewable energy in Malawi. According to Meriam (2009) qualitative research enables us to study the social world by generating descriptions of that world based on knowledge, experiences and the views of those involved. In other words, qualitative research can be used to gain a more holistic understanding of the complex phenomena, through analysis of its multiple aspects. Evidently, people’s perceptions, feelings and interpretation of the socio-political events around them formed a tremendous part of the data collected.

Furthermore, this study used key informant interviews (with selected actors in Malawi’s renewable energy sector—which included but not limited to officials from the Department of Energy Affairs (DoEA); Independent Power Producers (IPPs)—JCM Power in Salima and Cedar Energy Limited in Mulanje; Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA), EGENCO, Power Market Limited (PML), ESCOM and Renewable Energy Industries Association of Malawi (REIAMA)) as a tool for data collection. This was so to gain a more complete understanding of the research topic based on actors’ narratives, strategies, resources and institutions (rules of the game) and their networks. The approach was effective in unearthing the intangible

factors such as norms, socio-economic status and gender roles among others. The choice of doing key informant interviews was appropriate because it allowed flexible and dynamic conversations while maintaining a good level of standardization. A quantitative method could have been insufficient to answer the proposed research question, because politics of policy processes influencing actors promoting renewable energy in Malawi would be difficult to measure.

3.3 Target Population

The target population of this study comprised officials from both public and private organizations promoting the development of renewable energy in Malawi. Officials from these organizations were selected because of their knowledge on renewable energy and what needs to be done to ensure universal energy access. Purposive sampling was used to select the participating officials to narrow the focus to those with knowledge on renewable energy.

Lilongwe had a total of four organizations (the Department of Energy Affairs, MERA, PML and REIAMA), Blantyre had two (ESCOM and EGENCO) the rest were in the districts in which they operate (JCM Power in Salima, and Cedar Energy Limited in Mulanje). Out of the targeted population the researcher selected twenty (20) specialized key informants which comprised directors, top management and some important officials in renewable energy policy. Three (3) key informants were from the Department of Energy Affairs, three (3) from EGENCO, three (3) from ESCOM and three (3) from MERA. Two (2) key informants came from each of the following: PML, JCM, Cedar Energy Limited, and Energy Industries Association of Malawi.

3.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The first 'gate' to pass in this study's inclusion and exclusion criteria was based on key word searches related to the study's focal problem (the politics of policy processes in renewable energy). Indeed, key words were used to identify relevant studies for the substantive topic areas. This method systematically sampled literature that has been published on the topic within a specified time frame, and this study used articles from 1990 to 2021. It is explained by Solomon and Krishna (2011) that due to the energy crisis of 1973-1974 several nations developed programs to wean

themselves off foreign oil in order to ensure that any adverse effects would not recur. According to Solomon and Krishna (2011), different countries made policies and unleashed financial support to incentivize greater deployments of renewable energy sources and supporting infrastructure.

Systematic reviews were useful for identifying gaps in the literature, and assessing what is known on the topic. The sample was restricted to academic journal articles because the research question sought to understand what is happening in theory and practice within academic literature on the topic. Other types of literature such as books and book chapters were not included to limit the already large sample to a reasonable size, and because it was expected that perspectives published in articles would provide a sufficiently clear assessment of the state of the literature on this topic. Studies without an empirical focus were removed. Thus, only studies with primary data gathered directly from interviews, surveys, observation and sampling or from the meta-analysis of other such primary-sourced studies were considered. Finally, the third threshold focused on whether or not the studies were based on real world experiences or theoretical models. On this note, studies that did not examine impacts of policy processes on policy outcomes in renewable energy policies were removed.

Table 2: Search protocol

Step 1: Keyword Searches Broad criteria: “The Politics of Policy Processes in Renewable Energy” OR “The Politics of Renewable Energy Transitions” OR “Policy Actors in Renewable Energy” AND “Renewable Energy Policy” Narrower criteria: “The Policy Process” AND “Policy Making” AND “Renewable Energy” Step 2: “Empirical” Study Filter Does the study draw on primary data gathered directly from interviews and surveys or from the meta-analysis of other such primary-sourced studies? Step 3: “Study Instrument” Filter Does the study examine (policy narratives, policy actors’ strategies, resources, policy networks and institutions) of a given renewable energy policy?
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Furthermore, in order to get an in-depth understanding of the topic, participants were selected based on experience in policymaking or activities related thereto. This is to

say, actors involved in the politics of policy processes in Malawi's renewable energy sector were eligible to participate in the study if they have been involved in policymaking or activities related thereto for a period of at least three (3) years. To this end, the initial interviewees were identified purposively (through purposive sampling) and then further contacts suggested by those interviewees were followed up in a process of 'snowballing.' All interviews were conducted using an identical schedule of key questions and prompts followed by the interests and specific focusses of the interview guide.

3.5 Sampling and Sample Size

A purposive sample from a pool of renewable policy actors was selected. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007) a purposive sample also referred to as "judgmental or expert sample," is a type of nonprobability sampling. Thus, purposive sampling is an intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept or a phenomenon. Accordingly, the main purpose of purposive sampling is to produce a sample that can be representative of the population. This is often accomplished by expert knowledge of the population to select in a non-random manner a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Furthermore, the study also adopted snowballing as a sampling method because some of the respondents with the target characteristics were difficult to find. According to Frey (2018), snowball sampling is a sampling method used by researchers to generate a pool of participants for a research study through referrals made by individuals who share a particular characteristic of research interest with the target population. It is also referred to as chain sampling or chain referral sampling (see also Naderifa et al., 2017). It is argued by Naderifa et al. (2017) that in snowballing the researcher asks first few samples, selected conveniently, if they know anyone with similar views or situations to take part in the research. It is argued that in this method the existing study subjects recruit future subjects among their acquaintances, and sampling continues until data saturation. Thus, the snowball method does not only take little time but also provides the researcher with the opportunity to communicate better with samples as they are acquaintances of the first sample, and the first sample is linked to the researcher. This type of networking is particularly useful for finding people who

are not willing to reveal their identities. In other cases, snowball sampling may be less reliant on a reference sample, but it is still suitable to find unattainable populations (ibid).

Qualitative research experts argue that there is no straightforward answer to the question of ‘how many’ and that samples size is contingent on a number of factors relating to epistemological, methodological and practical issues (Vasileiou et al., 2018). In this study, a sample was selected from eight organizations (some public and others private) whose interests lies in achieving universal access to renewable electricity. This sample was purposive, that is, selected by virtue of their capacity to provide richly-textured information, relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, from these organizations a sample of 20 specialized key informants were engaged with. Since the study also employed snowballing sampling, in situations where a respondent made a referral, sample size determination was guided by the criterion of informational redundancy. In other words, sampling was determined when no new information was elicited by sampling more units.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

There are a variety of methods of data collection in qualitative research, and they include observations, textual or visual analysis (for example, from books or videos) and interviews (individuals or groups). However, this research used documents review and interviews as methods of data collection.

3.6.1 Documents Review

Document review is a way of collecting data by reviewing existing documents. According to Babbie (2010), it is a method of data collection which involves analysis of content from written documents in order to make certain deductions based on the study parameters. This is also called secondary data, and it entails extracting data from existing documents. As highlighted by Bowen (2009) document review can be thought of as texts that are equivalent to the information a researcher collects during an interview. These sources reflect the beliefs of people in a similar way to the data a researcher would collect from observations and interviews. Since document review can be used to answer research questions in a research study, this study reviewed

books, academic journal articles and other documents to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge.

3.6.2 Interviews

Interviews are widely used as a data collection tool in qualitative research and they are typically used as a research strategy to gather information about a participant's experience, views and beliefs concerning a specific research question or a phenomenon of interest (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). Ryan et al. (2009) highlight that although assumed to be a 'generic' data collection method, individual interviews come in a variety of forms—structured, semi-structured and unstructured. This study used key informant interviews, which were unstructured, and it was beyond the scope of this study to discuss the analytical bases of the other variants.

According to Kumar (1989), key informant interviews involve interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed information, ideas and insights on a particular subject. In this case, only a small number of informants are selected. Such informants are selected because they possess information or ideas that can be solicited by the investigator. Depending on the scope of the inquiry the investigator identified appropriate groups from which the key informants were drawn and then selected a few individuals from each group. Key informant interviews were essentially qualitative interviews, they were conducted using interview guides that listed the topics and issues to be covered during a session. It is believed that through these interviews rich data on interests, narratives and networks of policy actors was captured. In essence, this helped to unearth the opportunities and challenges for the development of the renewable energy sector in Malawi.

3.7 Interview Process

Face-to-face unstructured interviews were arranged with interested informants. Interviews were conducted in English and where appropriate in Chichewa. Interview time ranged from forty to forty-five minutes, with an interview average length of forty minutes. An interview topic guide was developed for this study based on the literature and the recent systematic review of politics of policy processes in the renewable energy sector, and it was used to ensure that informants' views on renewable policy narratives, strategies, resources and institutions on agenda setting were collected and

recorded consistently. The guide included a flexible checklist of topics to be covered by the informants. Questions were also supplemented by specific prompts.

Wherever possible the guide adapted to informant competencies and expertise. A voice recorder and note taking (writing in notepads) were used for the face-to-face interview. Records were kept in a password protected computer.

3.8 Data Analysis and Coding

Data analysis is basically the systematic application of statistical or logical techniques to turn raw data into information that can be used in making decisions and inferences (Hale & Napier, 2013). Krishnamurthi et al. (2004) explains that while data analysis in qualitative research can include statistical procedures, many times analysis becomes an ongoing iterative process where data is continuously collected and analysed almost simultaneously. Indeed, researchers generally analyse for patterns in observations through the entire data collection phase.

In addition to what has been highlighted, in this study the qualitative data obtained from interviews was transcribed *verbatim*, which is the first step in the process of familiarization with the data. It is also through this process that codes or categories were created. According to Patton (2002), this basically involves making sense of huge amounts of data by reducing the volume of raw information, followed by identifying significant patterns, and finally drawing meaning from data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence.

Data analysis commenced after the completion of data collection. However, interview recordings were fully listened to during data collection to check on the quality of the interview method and initial emerging patterns. Transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, taking an inductive and interpretive approach of data (Merriam, 2009). Thematic analysis involves the identification of ‘common themes’ or common codes that emerged from the data, through a careful reading and re-reading of the data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). This method attempted to identify key elements discussed by respondents and compared them with the data set.

Comparing data across different cases and field experiences was also used as a tool for generating reliable (that is, repeatable) interpretation. Themes which were

identified in only one transcript were also included. The records were listened back to maximize fidelity and support a more rigorous analysis and interpretation.

3.9 Data Management Methods

Data in qualitative research might include field notes, audiotapes/videotapes, transcriptions, memos and analyses. According to Lin (2009), data management is defined as a designed structure for systematizing, categorizing, and filing the materials to make them efficiently retrievable and duplicable. In other words, data management is the care and maintenance that is produced during the course of a research cycle. It is an integral part of the research process and it helps to ensure that data is properly organized, described, preserved and shared. In this study, the researcher assured the participants that their privacy will be protected and that their data will be treated with respect. This is so because if handled improperly, or not adequately protected, information divulged in an interview in a qualitative study could be harmful to the participants. Potential harm might include negative psychological impacts and feelings for a story shared. In this sense, procedures were made with anyone who interacted with the data to ensure that security protocols were followed. Furthermore, the data collected was documented. Documentation often means the difference in order to use an older data file or not, especially as details are forgotten over time. Files were also organized and named consistently as keeping organized files save significant time when searching through folders for a specific file. Versioning was also employed in this study, this basically means that distinct copies of a file were kept as documents change overtime. According to Briney et al (2020), this is traditionally considered in the context of computer code or software, but can easily be applied to data, draft manuscripts, or any other file type iteratively generated during research. Thus, versioning allowed the researcher to return to an earlier copy of a document, such as to rescue a portion of deleted text or to fix an analysis procedure, without having to recreate the entire thing from scratch. Lastly, data was backed up so as to prevent data loss due to a hard drive crash, water damage, lost notebooks or Secure Digital (SD) card. In this case, a 3-2-1 Rule was followed, where three copies of the data were created, kept in two geographically separate locations, and in more than one storage device. This was so because having multiple copies reduces the risk of corruption or loss of the master copy. Similarly, having

backups in at least one location prevented data loss due to localized events like fire or device theft.

3.10 Ensuring Quality

The approaches that this study used to ensure validity and reliability (that is, repeatability) of data collection, data analysis and interpretation were multiple. Validity refers to establishing whether findings are credible (that is, internal validity), but also transferable (that is, external validity), which means assessing whether the finding can be applied to other contexts/settings (Merriam, 2009).

The approaches that this study used to reduce the risk of subjectivity included: having a comprehensive and a precise interview guide, following systematic data collection methods, looking for ‘disconfirming or inconsistent evidence’, that is, negative cases (Rice & Ezzy, 1999) and interpreting data in relation to the wider relevant literature. In addition, to ensure that informants expressed their views and not those of any other, this study stressed the importance on confidentiality and anonymity in order to receive honest answers.

3.11 Ethics

The proposal for this study passed through the Ethics Committee of the University of Malawi, for an internal review process. Informed consent from participants was achieved by providing them with information sheets describing the research aim, what was expected of them, confidentiality and anonymity issues and the right to withdraw at any time. All information was kept confidentially. Confidentiality of the interviews was emphasized so that individuals should feel more at ease about disclosing information and personal opinion on the topic. Interview records were stored on a password-protected computer and transcripts were anonymous (in terms of names and identifying information) and marked with a reference number. It was also indicated that data records and transcripts will be stored for a period of one year after completion of the study, and be destroyed thereafter.

3.12 Foreseeable and Unforeseeable Adverse Events

Foreseeable and unforeseeable events can occur in any type of research (medical or social/behavioral or educational). Some events are expected, while others are

unexpected. Events may also vary in seriousness and the extent to which they are related to the research. In this research some foreseeable adverse events included a participant refusing to sign the consent form or not being prepared to be audio-taped. Moreover, some participants gave answers that were too brief to use. Interviewing elites also presented a particular challenge as they invariably had severe time constraints and tend to have high expectations of the interviewer. Their positions meant that they usually have considerable power and control in their domain (and maybe beyond) and they usually ask the questions rather than answer them.

Apart from the issues highlighted above, since at some point this research depended on referrals, the researcher expected that there will be induced behavioral alterations. Thus, after a little description of what the research involved by the initial participant, the others could have tuned their responses to align with what the researcher wanted to hear. The data obtained could not be as raw as in the preceding interview, to an extent it was expected to be fabricated.

Furthermore, another adverse event that this study expected was loss of data due to a crushed, lost and/or stolen computer. When a computer has been lost or stolen, research participants may be subjected to loss of confidentiality.

This research used the informed consent as a creative means of communication and education to ensure that participants understood as best as possible what was expected from them. Thus, participants were convinced that the data will be deidentified and that they had nothing to worry about. To allay fears of being misquoted, participants were assured that copies of transcripts will be sent to them—to scrutinize and check for accuracy. In case of audio recordings, participants were advised that they could ask for a particular section of the interview to be off the record. The researcher also made sure that participants were well aware of the research interview genre, that is, frank, detailed answers were expected and that there was no right or wrong answer. In addition, the researcher also made sure that he was well prepared for the interviews and that there was no poor framing of questions to avoid getting answers that were too brief to use. On elites, the researcher tried as much as possible to be on top of things, that is, had a good knowledge of the subject matter and also researched the person that was to be interviewed. Lastly to avoid data loss, the researcher made sure that the data is backed up. This means maintaining at least one copy of data on a separate

medium such as a flash disk, the cloud or an external hard drive. On this note, the researcher also maintained constant checks on the medium through which the data had been stored to see if it was not corrupted or accessible to unauthorized persons. To avoid loss of confidentiality due to a lost or stolen computer, the data collected was coded as early as possible and thereafter the folders were encrypted.

3.13 Possible Direct or Indirect Benefits to Participants and/or Institutions

Since the research aims to understand the politics of policy processes in Malawi's renewable energy sector, there are heterogeneous political, economic and technological actors that are motivated by different interests and agendas. In other words, the transition to renewable energy and/or the development of the same is not a simple technological substitution, rather it involves the re-ordering of social and political relations. To this end, participants of this research (whether institutions or individuals) will have different benefits. For example, the Government through the Department of Energy Affairs might learn, assess and strategize on how to reduce the vulnerability of the country to energy shocks and also project how to bear the brunt of shorter-term climate change impacts. In particular, through this research amidst political and economic processes that interact to either promote or frustrate the development of policies, the Department of Energy Affairs will be enlightened on how to overcome the hiccups therein and increase investment on renewable energy to reduce fuel and electricity costs and also increase grid reliability.

As explained by Kammen (2015), a technology and policy-driven shift towards renewable energy has been advocated on environmental grounds and to a lesser extent to improve energy security. Indeed, after the research has been completed and the results disseminated, the researcher believes that the study will be able to enlighten ESCOM and EGENCO not only on challenges but also on opportunities that need to be exploited. Indeed, a renewable energy future requires not only technological change but also careful attention to the political and social implications of the transition. Empowering IPPs and other abled consumers with the tools to participate more actively in the energy market will therefore help reduce costs for purchased power or transmission services associated with traditional generation.

Having unearthed what really goes on in policy processes this research will also help officials from MERA to better understand the levels and structures of competition within the energy sector. This will help the Authority to understand how better the exploitation of renewable energy resources can be promoted to achieve energy efficiency. Substantially, this will also help MERA to promote the interests of energy consumers with respect to energy prices at the same time staying clear of compromising the energy quality. Lastly, to all the participants (individually), this research will help them understand how and why decisions are made the way they are made. Thus, it will help them understand the ‘micro’ politics of the contexts in which they work, and how to use that understanding to frame and implement policies and programs.

3.14 Risks

As in other areas of society, conducting research amid the COVID-19 pandemic requires adaptation while ensuring that the quality of the research is maintained. This calls for reflection on how data collection was carried out, how integrity of the data was maintained and how participatory approaches were enhanced. In qualitative research, typical rules of engagement aim to place the researcher and the researched as close as possible to build a rapport. Moreover, a researcher as an instrument of data collection has to establish a relationship with the participants to maintain trust, intimacy and proximity. To a greater extent, this also helps to access both personal and nuanced data and instill a level of credibility in research findings. Against this backdrop, there are concerns of COVID-19 infection as it is difficult to detect all infected people because of lack of testing or symptoms. Consequently, this puts the researcher and participants at risk. In this research, to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 *inter alia* there was frequent disinfection of hands either by washing or using alcohol-based disinfectants, social distancing, and in indoor spaces, the use of face masks or face covering devices were mandatory if the minimum distance could not be respected.

3.15 Research Dissemination Strategy

This research targets the policy actors in renewable energy in Malawi. The main goal of this research was to understand policy actors, their values, interests, resources,

narratives and networks, and how these influence actors' impact on the political turf—encompassing the realm of potential choices or choices not made. Thus, the study revealed opportunities and challenges that the renewable energy sector in Malawi is facing. To achieve this main goal, the findings of this study will be submitted to the Directorate of Energy Affairs in the Ministry of Energy, and relevant international and local NGOs whose interests lie in achieving universal access to renewable electricity. The findings will also be submitted to relevant scientific research journals such as *African Journal of Political Science*, *Southern African Journal of Policy and Development* and the *Journal of Energy in Southern Africa* for publishing.

3.16 Conclusion

This section presented the methodology which this study utilized in order to ascertain how politics of policy processes influence the narratives of the actors involved, their strategies, resources, and rules of the game—either formal or informal, on agenda setting in Malawi's renewable energy sector. In brief, the section has presented the study design, the sampling techniques, the data collection methods, the way data was analysed, and how the study overcame quality issues, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and the discussion of the data that was collected from public and private organizations on the politics of policy processes. The organizations comprised of Department of Energy Affairs, Power Market Limited (PML), Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM), Electricity Generation Company (EGENCO), Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA), JCM Power, Cedar Energy Limited and Renewable Energy Industries Association of Malawi (REIAMA). Rational choice institutionalism and path dependence theories, and other relevant literature have been used in this discussion. In summary this presentation of findings and the discussion will be based on the narratives of policy actors in renewable energy and the way these narratives suit political actors' interests at the agenda setting stage to promote the development of renewable energy in Malawi. The presentation of findings and the discussion will also be based on the agenda setting of renewable energy in Malawi, the actors involved, the strategies these actors use in order to get their narratives on the formal agenda, the resources that are used in order to win competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage and the extent to which institutions (rules of the game) reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy in Malawi.

4.2 Forces that Shape Renewable Energy Proposals

Public Policy is a complex and multifaceted process. It involves the interplay of many actors. This includes many businesses, interest groups and individuals competing and collaborating to influence policymakers to act in a particular way and on a variety of policies. Furthermore, there are a number of factors that may influence public policies. The different respondents when interrogated on this, pointed out that these factors may include; public opinion, economic conditions, technological change, interest groups, specific events, institutional influences and ideologies. Indeed, public opinion and priorities have strong influence on public policy overtime. (Burstein, 2003) explains that democratic institutions may link opinion and policy on issues that

are especially important, relatively simple and addressed by legislatures straightforwardly, but such issues are few. On many issues the public cannot be said to have meaningful political opinions, so policy must be the product of other forces. According to Arnold (1990) many issues are so complex, and the legislative process so arcane, that most citizens are unable to ascertain whether their interests are being served. This is in line with the elitist model of public policymaking which contends that the public is generally poorly informed about policies and that the elites shape the public opinion on policy questions (Knill & Tosun, 2011; Howlett et al., 2009).

On this note, the most common objection to the claim that public opinion influences public policy is really determined by interest organizations, political parties and elites, particularly economic elites. The resources available to interest organizations and elites may enable them to get what they want, even in opposition to public opinion, and political parties may, when in office, enact policies favored by their most ardent supporters rather than the general public. Even when opinion and policy are highly correlated, the public's power may be more apparent than real; citizens may have been persuaded that they are getting what they want while effective power lies elsewhere (Knill & Tosun, 2011; Petry, 2007).

Economic conditions also significantly affect the policy and operating context for governments. Indeed, governments may decide to regulate some aspects of economic activity in order to engineer economic growth or prevent negative economic conditions in the future. Certainly, economic conditions may have a direct or an indirect bearing on the policies that are adopted and implemented. For example, in recessionary periods, there is a sustained decline of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to slow economic growth and high unemployment rates. In response to this, governments may increase their own spending, cut taxes or increase the money supply in order to encourage consumers to spend more (Stiglitz & Rosengard 2015). However, critics claim that the costs of increased expenditures undermine confidence in the economy because of the large budget deficits they generate, which, in turn, deter private sector investment and discourage job creation. In times of recession, it is therefore very unlikely for governments to shift their efforts to other policy domains rather than recovering the economy. Thus, some policies may not be adopted because

the government does not have enough funds to implement them. In the case of Malawi, one respondent said;

“Malawi has a staggering macro-economic infrastructure, this in itself scares investors not only in the renewable energy sector but in other sectors as well, in the end who loses? It is not the government nor the politicians and not the investors, but the ordinary citizens who might have benefited from policies and projects that could have been introduced... it is very unfortunate” [Ref. #2].

This narration shows that indeed economic conditions affect the kind of policies proposed and those that may be enacted. To this end, economic conditions affect resources likely to be available to policymakers which in turn affect governments’ priorities in political and development terms or their openness to international influences. It is alleged by Sathaye et al. (2011), that under international agreements, financial pledges have been made by wealthier nations to aid developing countries with climate change mitigation measures. One area of interest is in renewable energy technologies. On this note, it can therefore be said that economic conditions may help determine who can participate in policy and how.

On the flipside, when the economy is doing well governments are willing to engage in other policy issues that may be construed as being ‘more quality of life.’ For example, environmental or social policies are likely to get more traction when the economy is robust because the thought is that these policies might cost money—regardless of the accuracy of these perceptions, the public is more willing to entertain such action.

Technology also impacts policy by catalyzing new debates and/or creating awareness of new opportunities. Technology is constantly changing and this affects the business environment directly or indirectly as public policies change with technological inventions. New, lower-cost and easier to use technologies can increase public support for policies that promote renewable energy and energy efficiency, and that reduce environmental damage. For example, in Malawi with the energy problem, we have seen the government commissioning a solar power plant in Salima to supplement to the national grid. An official from one of the organizations said;

“We even have mini-grids, this is a kind of company that produces, transmits and distribute electricity to society without engaging with the System Market Operator (SMO), which in our case is ESCOM.”

Surely, this shows that not only the government but Independent Power Producers (IPPs) as well are able to take advantage of the technology and bridge the energy gap for a better Malawi.

Another respondent also highlighted:

“Let us hope that this is just the beginning of good things, we hope to see more, with more solar plants and the mini-hydro plants that may be installed we can revolutionize our energy sector and become energy sufficient. I urge policymakers to look into this with an open eye, renewable energy technologies can change our societies. You go to the villages they are using solar powered lamps for lighting, and even irrigation (though at a very small scale), well, that is clean energy. If we can do this on a large scale, then we may be telling a different story in the next five years or so.”

These remarks show that policy actors have to consider technology in their discussions and/or debates on energy transition and settle for one that provide the most benefits to society. In fact, reliance on single, or limited energy sources and over-centralized generation poses a number of risks, but particularly the susceptibility to disruptions. On this note, a respondent highlighted;

“Malawi’s energy mix is highly dependent on hydropower, which has proved less reliable given recent recurrent droughts. In order to increase both reliability and capacity of our electricity, I believe renewable energy technologies should be part of the broader energy mix strategy. In addition, upholding a centralized strategy will likely result in an outdated electricity system and prevent the system from moving onto a more sustainable trajectory. If you ask me, I will tell you over and over that the answer is in renewable energy technologies.”

This reveals that renewable energy technologies contribute to reliability of energy services, particularly in less developed countries like Malawi that often suffer from

insufficient grid access. To this end, technological advancements are worth a factor to look into when making renewable energy policy proposals in the country.

An essential characteristic of any polity is the way that different groups participate in the process of policy formation. In most communities, the number of potential public issues far exceeds the capabilities of decision-making institutions to process them (Cobb et al., 1976). This means that issues or their proponents must consequently compete for a place on the decision-making agenda. According to Halpin and Fraussen (2017), interest groups are formally organized for some common concerns in order to attempt to affect public policy in their favor. Dür & De Bièvre (2007) explain that interest groups are a major channel through which citizens can express their opinions to decision-makers. Thus, their participation in policymaking may improve decision-making processes by supporting policies that are in line with citizen preferences and by blocking policies that solely reflect the interests of the governing elite. On this, one respondent elucidated that;

“The engagements that interest groups have with policy-makers through different platforms, uh... say, stakeholder’s meetings or public demonstrations may also supply public officials with much information, often of the technical sort—concerning the nature and possible consequences of policy proposals. In doing so, they contribute to the rationality of policy making. In addition to what I have just told you, interest groups may also submit memoranda and draft policy proposals to the legislature, and they also mobilize the public to support their advocacy on particular policy proposals. This is what they do, and I believe this is their job” [Ref. #1].

According to Zeigler (1980), interest groups are formed to fulfill a need in society which is not met by the established institutions. Thus, their main interest is to transform social power into political power which is equated to legislative action. According to Zahariadis (2003), interest groups are a form of political organization that reflects the exercise of power through the allocation of attention in a political system. Indeed, with interest groups, some conflicts are exploited, while others are suppressed by being kept off the agenda. To this end, an official from one of the organizations highlighted;

“For me policymakers in all policy domains cannot ignore interest groups. Policy outcomes are considered the result of the interplay between state and non-state actors. Here, the general assumption is that policymaking benefits from the inclusion of a diversity of actors because they provide policy expertise and legitimacy. Although, I do not know exactly what policymakers seek from those non-state actors, I think I know the extent to which and how interest groups (as policy stakeholders) prepare themselves for policy action. There are times you see them commanding a large following, they have good organization. Almost in all policies you see them performing an interest articulation function... they express demands and present alternatives for policy actions.”

Accordingly, this report suggests that on many occasions policymaking civil servants are likely to be scanning the horizon for groups who may be able to aid them in policy formulation. In this case, it is assumed that the policy relevant group simplify the policymaking tasks for bureaucrats. In fact, groups may be actively pursued because they possess indispensable information which decision-makers seek. Malone et al. (1994) also explain that no lawmaker brings to his job the technical knowledge requisite to an intelligent evaluation of all legislation; neither is the legislature as a whole geared to supply the necessary quantity of expert help. Thus, legislators turn to pressure groups for pertinent opinions, data analysis—and the information they provide may not be available elsewhere. On this note, policymaking is not a case of groups begging government to let them in, but of government trying to make use of what exists in the group society. It can therefore be concluded that interest groups are an important element of the policymaking process as they are information repositories and they help shape policies in one way or another.

It is claimed by Dür & De Bièvre (2007), that an understanding of the role of interest groups in the policymaking process is essential for explanations of policy outcomes. Thus, an analysis should be made on how much power interest groups have, and how power is distributed among interest groups. On this note, Bianchi and Kossoudji (2001) explain that one of the most popular paradigms for studying interest groups is the distinction between pluralist and corporatist system of representation. On one hand, pluralist groups are spontaneous creations of their leaders and members—they

come into being without the need for prior approval from the government. They freely define their own fields of activity according to their subjective preferences, and there is no limit to the number of groups that can compete in any field. Furthermore, multiple groups can compete for the same members, and individuals can belong to multiple groups at the same time. It is also explained that membership is voluntary, and members retain the right to resign. They are also free to select and remove their leaders at regular intervals (Moe, 1981). Examples of pluralist groups in Malawi may include Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR), Youth and Society (YAS), and Interfaith Organizations like Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), and Church and Society of the The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP).

On the other hand, corporatist groups are public bodies that are created by statute, supervised by a parent ministry, and financed with state funds (Bianchi & Kossoudji, 2001). Their fields of activity are stipulated in law and may not exceed those boundaries. They operate as official monopolies in their designated sectors, and no rival groups are permitted. In corporatist groups, membership is compulsory for everyone who belongs to a legally designated social or economic category, and the government retain the right to screen, appoint and dismiss organizational officers. In Malawi, examples of corporatist groups may include the Medical Council of Malawi, the Malawi Law Society and the Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (MCCCI).

The hallmark of corporatism is lopsided bargain between interest group leaders and the state. The state agrees to grant favored groups a degree of power, money and status. In return group leaders agree to help implement government policies, to soften their demands and criticisms, and to control their members. The exchange gives interest group leaders numerous privileges that they would not enjoy if they headed private, voluntary associations, including guaranteed access to top decision makers and virtual immunity from potential rivals and dissatisfied members.

It can be said that pluralist groups typify democratic systems in which interest groups compete with each other in relation to the government to advance their own interests. In this case, the government is depicted as a relatively neutral arena for mediating and finding compromises between various interests. This therefore means that policy is an

aggregation of group preferences emanating from continuous bargaining and negotiations (Knill & Tosun, 2011). Although policymaking institutions are relatively open, and the government relatively neutral, that is, not erecting any barriers, power is not equally dispersed among the interest groups. In fact, their differences in terms of organizational resources such as ability to mobilize, size of membership, financial resources, strategic position in society, and professional expertise influence the groups' capacity to access policy processes.

On the contrary, it is argued that corporatist groups usually place the state firmly on the driver's seat and are likely to be present in authoritarian regimes (Bianchi & Kossoudji, 2001). To this end, corporatist groups exercise tenuous privileges instead of inherent rights. Thus, governments enjoy enormous discretion in manipulating the system to promote favored interests and to demote potential trouble makers. It can be postulated that in corporatist regimes, groups use the inside access model of policymaking and they tend to be homogenous, closely knit in background, mores and goals. As highlighted by Cobb et al. (1976), there is limited issue expansion and policy initiators might seek to involve an identification group and selected attention groups, both of which may help create the feeling of urgency and importance necessary to attain a quick and favorable response from decision makers. This is done in a relatively private setting as the public may be totally unaware of the said policy.

Thus, the corporatist variant of interest group representation describes a pattern of agenda building and policy formation which attempts to exclude the participation of the public. This is to say that decisions occur in a specialized structure where only organized interests have legitimate access, making it possible to 'organize out' issues that are conflictual with their interests (Zahariadis, 2003). In this sense, proposals arise within governmental units or in groups close to the government. The issue is then expanded to identification and attention groups in order to create sufficient pressure on decision makers to place the item on the formal agenda. At no point is the public greatly involved, and the initiators make no effort to get the issue on the public agenda. This setting is in line with the elite model of agenda setting, where policy is in the hands of elites (the few), and society is ill informed of the policymaking process, yet nevertheless affected by the resulting policies (Cobb et al., 1976; Howlett et al., 2009; Olufemi, 2016).

Bianchi and Kossoudji (2001), argue that as ideal types, *pluralism* and *corporatism* are starting points for classifying and comparing interest group systems, but they are no more than intellectual abstractions, in the real world there are no 'pure types' of either pluralist or corporatist political systems. Even in the same country, the relative balance between these two types of group organization often changes dramatically from time to time and from sector to sector. For example, most authoritarian regimes find it extremely useful to preserve prominent enclaves of pluralism, particularly in sectors in which they want to promote fragmentation and weakness instead of coherence and unity. The argument here is that, by encouraging the proliferation of small and competing groups, pluralism can serve as an excellent means to 'divide and rule.' In this sense, pluralism can provide just enough freedom for squabbling groups to nullify one another's efforts of building a popular and effective political force.

It is also argued by Bianchi and Kossoudji (2001), that most democracies encourage the development of corporatist interest groups to compensate for the perceived inadequacies of pluralism and multiparty system. For example, in most of Western Europe, a small circle of interest group cartels holds regular summit meetings with government planners to negotiate economic agreements for the entire community. Furthermore, in developing countries, rulers try to pass off what might be called 'debilitating' pluralism as an aspect of nascent democracy (ibid). They hope that foreign donors and human rights advocates will view the persistent disorganization of civil society organization as the lingering effect of collective action problems instead of the result of deliberate government policies. This allows them to take credit for adopting the window dressing of democracy without having to share power with autonomous groups and equal partners.

It is also worth noting that most interest groups are notoriously biased spokespersons for the broad constituencies they claim to represent (Bianchi & Kossoudji, 2001). Even in mature democracies of the United States and Western Europe, group leaders often speak only for themselves and for a small fraction of their privileged and assertive followers.

It is argued that public policymaking is not an easy task. In fact, there are complex and intricate processes and a series of decisions within policymaking (Howlett et al., 2009). This may mean that policies take time to be adopted as there are also a lot of

actors, ideas and interests behind the series of decisions within the policymaking processes (ibid). However, there are other events or episodes that can catapult particular issues to prominence on the government's agenda. Atikson (2018) highlights that a focusing event is an occurrence that can make government decision-makers aware of the existence of a problem. Thus, the event is usually outside of the policy apparatus and its structure. It is a push, for example, a crisis or disaster that comes along to call attention to the problem, a powerful symbol that catches on, or the personal experience of the policy-maker. Essentially, the focusing event elevates policy items from the unofficial or public agenda onto the government one. One respondent highlighted:

“Let's say we have floods or any other natural disaster or a crisis (for example the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 in the United States)... this is a reality that policy actors cannot deny. In a moment everyone will be talking about it, and this has the potential to change or deviate government's course of action even in other policy domains in order to address the perceived problem at hand” [Ref. #2].

In terms of policymaking, it can be said that focusing events are better explained with the garbage-can theory of policymaking. In garbage-can theory, decision-making occurs in an environment that lacks rationality and is prone to meddling, notably, the absence of a bottom line or specific measures of costs and benefits of decisions provides a breeding ground for political garbage. In this sense, focusing events serve as a critical ingredient to cut through competing interests and options. Focusing events are also related to the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), where convergence of various factors yields a window of opportunity for policy change.

However, it has to be pointed that while focusing events may often be cited as the source of or rationale for change in a policy area, the existence of a focusing event does not always presuppose an attendant policy shift, or change in the viewpoints of actors or policy coalitions. According to Atikson (2018), organizational culture and cultural impact may have a critical role in determining whether a focusing event results in policy change or not. In hindsight, what is deemed to be a focusing event is a matter of opinion, some may agree an event has occurred and others may deny it. Furthermore, if focusing events always attract the urgency as often cited, then it is

quite disquieting and speaks poorly of the policy process generally and the potential for policy learning specifically.

The relationship between public policy and government institutions is very close. Dye (2014) articulates that traditionally, political science was defined as the study of government institutions. The institutional approach concentrates on describing the more formal and legal aspects of government institutions; their formal structure, legal powers, procedural rules and functions (Anyebe, 2018). Indeed, political activities generally center around particular government institutions, thus, the presidency, the legislature, courts, bureaucracies, local governments and so on. According to Heyi (2020), institutions determine who are the key actors, the payoffs to the actors, the deliberations in which they interact and the level of their interaction. Furthermore, each policy field has its own features that can escalate or decrease operational costs. Respondents when interrogated on how institutions affect the development of policy proposals lamented;

“If you ask me I don’t like the experience, there is exceptionally long time to go through all the departments and to tick all the boxes right, Department of Energy Affairs, Ministry of Lands, Malawi Investment and Trade Center (MITC) and so on... this is a bureaucratic nightmare, something should be done to unstitch the processes that have to be followed. On top of that there are times where you have to ‘grease the wheels’ (give the officers some money) for your documents to move from one department to another. This is a cost that we incur, but what choice do we have?” [An official from one of the IPPs]

Another official also said;

“I think there is too much bureaucracy, and this in a way kills the momentum of developmental proposals... it could have been better if there was a one-stop center as a way of streamlining the processes.”

The narrations show that the institutions and the structures that are in place encourage great political transaction costs. In that case, cooperation may be challenging and policies may be too rigid or very unstable and could tend to have more damaging abilities. On the contrary, where institutions are well developed, political actors will

be able cooperate so as to adapt to economic and political shocks, resulting in policies with positive characteristics such as stability, adaptability and public consideration.

Ideologies may affect and shape public policies, on this note, Howlett et al. (2009) explain that ideologies affect the development and/or adoption of public policies. Ideologies are simply defined as people's deep-seated beliefs about how the world is and how it ought to be, and are rarely called into question. Campbell (2002) argue that taken for granted world views of policymakers constrain the range of policy choices they are likely to consider when formulating policies. A respondent highlighted;

“Isn't it obvious? Everyone has beliefs, many of which were inculcated when we were young, maybe partly through the schools. Ideologies affect the way we do things as people... what we want to do has to be matched with what we think can be done. Each of us take for granted certain assumptions about what is possible, assumptions that also shape our political proposals. Whatever our ideological convictions, we do not propose what we believe to be impossible”
[Ref. #3].

Indeed, ideologies play a crucial role in shaping politics and policy choices. This is to say that they help people make sense of the complex realities by identifying general policy problems and the motivations of actors involved in politics and policy. It has to be highlighted however, that these sets of ideas tend to be diffuse and do not really translate into specific views on a specific policy problem.

Given the central role of modern power in society, achieving universal access quickly and cost-effectively is considered the most important energy-related objective for policymakers. In addition, the socio-economic benefits of universal access to electricity largely outweigh the costs of achieving it (Hafner et al., 2018). However argued, Taalo et al. (2015) highlight that Malawi is faced with serious supply problems which include; increasing electricity demand, insufficient power generation capacity, poor power quality and reliability among others. Indeed, on this note, a respondent said:

“In urban areas power outages of 24 hours or more are not uncommon. ESCOM needs to ration power supply by regular load-shedding as capacity cannot meet demand. This is a sorry situation to be in. Surely, something

needs to be done quickly. I believe that energy access has clear benefits through direct impacts on poverty eradication, climate change, health, water and economic transformation. We all need electricity for one reason or another, whether it is for the small businesses people do by the roadsides, for example, operating a barbershop or selling cold drinks, no one should not be denied access to this valuable service.”

Another respondent also said:

“If you are paying attention, the world is undergoing profound changes in the energy markets, with energy transitions growing stronger each and every year, as a country we should not be left behind. Therefore, increasing investments in sustainable energy production and supply will help secure an inclusive, prosperous and sustainable future for all Malawians while working towards meeting targets set under Sustainable Development Goals.”

Indeed, on this note, whilst recognizing the numerous challenges in the energy sector, National Energy Policy (2018) specifies that its overall goal is to provide a guiding framework for increased access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, efficient and modern energy for all sectors and every person in the country. It emphasises the importance of private sector participation in the sector and provides an environment conducive for such participation, be it in the form of direct investment, Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), Independent Power Producers (IPPs) or other participation vehicles. It also emphasises on sustainable and clean energy which is accessible to all (GoM, 2018). Clearly, this shows that as a country we subscribe to the Energy for All narrative.

In addition to what has been pronounced in the National Energy Policy (2018), it has to be highlighted that only a minor fraction of the population is connected to the electricity grid, and there is intermittent power access. Taalo et al. (2015) explain that the country also faces a widening gap between electricity demand and supply which is exacerbated by urbanization, economic development, population growth and rural electrification. This results in straining the existing system, intensifying the frequency of blackouts and brownouts. This in turn adversely affects industrial production and

provision of economic services as well as deterring foreign investments. On this one, an official from one of the organizations said:

“As a country we are very far from being energy secure, because to me, to be energy secure is to be assured when a nation can deliver energy economically, reliably, environmentally soundly and safely, and in quantities sufficient to support the growing economy and defence needs.”

Another respondent narrated:

“With no reserve margin and a stressed system, the reliability and quality of the electricity supply is poor. Further to that, Malawi depends on domestic generation, and there are no significant interconnections with the neighbouring countries. This is worrisome.”

These narrations show that stories (narratives) are used to communicate with, influence and engage audiences, they serve as artefacts to be investigated in terms of content, actors, relationships, power, and structures and they can be used to gather information, provide insight, and reframe evidence in ways that more science or ordered formats miss. However, they are not benign or neutral, which is in line with what Curran (2012) suggested, that narratives influence how we understand issues, and the values we ascribe them. This may further mean that meaning is socially constructed and that some actors have more capacity to influence this social construction than others. Due to the fact that there are a lot of actors that are involved in policymaking, public policies in this case can be taken to be a product of the clash of narratives that different actors bring to the table.

4.3 Narratives

Public policy scholarship attempts to understand how knowledge and information is used in policy processes. This knowledge and information is often communicated through ‘policy narratives.’ According to Mohan & Topp (2018), a narrative is a story with a temporal sequence of events which lays out a problem, its causes and consequences and typically makes arguments for possible solutions to the problem. In this respect, narratives simplify and communicate complex issues and enable actors to make decisions in the face of uncertainty and complexity. Thus, narratives are critical

to the meaning-making process as they can be used to persuade actors toward a particular policy preference or to influence decision-making (Huda, 2018). On this note, Fadlallah et al. (2019) explain that narratives also referred to as storytelling, exemplars and testimonials can be used to convey information because they are easily understandable and memorable. Thus, narratives can facilitate information processing and provide value and emotional appeal to the information provided. In addition, people can relate to narrative information regardless of their level of literacy, expertise or culture.

It is argued that narratives are an important element of the broad evidence-base required to inform complex policy processes (Wolmer, 2006; Fadlallah et al., 2019; Holden et al., 2021). Narratives have a clear purpose for policy change as they are not simply neutral, objective descriptions of the status quo but provide suggestions on how the world should be, by identifying both the norm and the point of departure (Mohan & Topp, 2018). In this respect, there are a number of common, influential and persistent narratives that underpin many policies aimed at addressing environmental and energy problems in the world.

4.3.1 Renewable Energy Narratives

Key actors in the energy domain both in Malawi and elsewhere, for example, policymakers, power producers and the civil society coalesce around different narratives regarding the role of energy in society and the goals and priorities of an energy system. Indeed, the respondents of this study mentioned that some of the common narratives for renewable energy include; energy for development, energy for all, energy security, energy democracy and energy justice. It should be highlighted however that the narratives identified here are not meant to be exhaustive by any means. A thorough analysis of the different positions of all the actors in renewable energy in the world is beyond the scope of this research.

Energy for Development

The energy sector has generally been perceived as key to economic development with a strong correlation between economic growth and expansion of energy consumption (Sathaye, 2011). On this note a respondent said:

“I think energy is at the core of everything that we do in our societies. Accordingly, it is even the main ingredient of development. I believe with stable and reliable energy supply, as a country, development wise, we might be able to do more. For example, companies will be able to produce more than their current rate, as most of the times their production is limited because of power interruptions. With reliable energy supply it is also possible to achieve good quality education, the provision of clean water and better health services. It is pretty evident energy is the main ingredient of development” [Ref. #2].

Another respondent reported:

“Sometimes I feel that if we had stable and reliable energy supply we could not be talking about poverty the way we do now. I think its immense because of the energy situation.”

Surely, assumptions over economic growth have historically been the underlying basis for most countries’ ambitious plans to increase electricity capacity. In this sense, energy policy documents and reports indicate a clear focus in solving the energy problem, that is, developing cost effective energy for economic growth while maintaining climate change commitments and ensuring energy security (Mohan & Topp, 2018).

Certainly, with energy being recognized as a critical input for national economic development, the measure of development in most societies today is synonymous with the level of energy consumption (Islam & Salma, 2016). Notwithstanding, modern day demands are still met largely from fossil fuels. On this note, Holden et al. (2021) argue that if the current rate of consumption is maintained, there are not many years left before the reserves become depleted. In other words, the energy system is unsustainable, and even worse, it is on a trajectory to remain unsustainable, and if this trend continues, it may negatively affect the development of any country. In addition, fossil fuel sources pose environmental challenge as they are primary sources of pollution. In this case, renewable energy is considered a cleaner and an unlimited source, aligning energy and environmental issues to ensure that economic growth and

environmental protection are achieved together (Mohan & Topp, 2018; Sathaye, 2011).

Energy for All

Energy powers human progress. It cuts across all sectors and lies at the heart of all countries' core interests (Yumkella, 2012). Against this backdrop, energy poverty in developing countries is an especially complex issue. On this note, Sy & Mokaddem, (2022) highlight that because energy is central to economic development, ending energy poverty is an inherently political process. Indeed, eradicating energy poverty implies providing energy access to enough energy in general and electricity in particular. Thus, the key to universal access is in strengthening the grid to supply electricity to energy-poor people and settlements (Holden et al., 2021). Besides 'energy for all' being an issue of practical importance, it is also a matter of equity and it was an impetus of the new *Sustainable Energy for All* initiative by the United Nations in 2011 (Yumkella, 2012).

One of the respondents highlighted:

“In my view, the ‘Energy for all’ narrative best describes what we want to achieve in the energy sector in this country. I would say it sets the tone for both technical and political objectives of most countries in our region, it gives us a purpose of why we do what we do.”

Another respondent said:

“In the current state, most people suffer from severe energy poverty. However, with renewable energy sources, individuals should be able to own equipment that generates electricity and this may contribute to the safety of local supply, thus, in the end, improving and widening power supply. Surely, renewable energy can also contribute to increasing the reliability of energy services, particularly in remote and rural areas that often suffer from insufficient grid access” [Ref. #1].

According to Holden et al. (2021), to end energy poverty there is a need to develop on-site renewable energy solutions that can supply energy poor areas and people with low cost reliable electricity. In this sense, solar power is one potential solution,

including stand-alone systems with battery banks and larger solar parks. Echoing this line of thought Yumkella (2012) articulates that increasing affordable energy technologies bring modern energy services to rural communities where an extension of the conventional electric power grid would be prohibitively expensive and impractical. In this narrative, industrialized countries must accelerate the transition to low emission technologies and developing countries, many of them developing rapidly and at large scale, have the opportunity to leapfrog conventional energy options and move directly to cleaner energy alternatives that will enhance economic and social development (Yumkella, 2012).

Energy Security

Given the interdependence of economic growth and energy consumption, access to stable energy supply is a major political concern, a technical and an economic challenge. The argument here is that prolonged disruptions creates serious economic and basic functionality problems for most societies (Sathaye, 2011). It is argued that in the long term, the potential for fossil fuel scarcity and decreasing quality of fossil reserves presents an important reason for a transition to a worldwide renewable energy system (see Prasad et al., 2007; Williams & Williams, 2014). Indeed, the increased use of renewable energy permits countries to transition from the use of fossil fuels, and in doing so existing reserves of fossil fuels are depleted less rapidly and the point at which these reserves will eventually be depleted is shifted further into the future. In this regard, a respondent said:

“I always think that the main objective of energy transition is to move away from fossil fuel dependencies and its associated imminent scarcity. That is, to be energy secure in the long run. Surely, renewables help us solve the problem of securing energy supply through diversification of primary energy sources. They give us a chance to transform to a system compatible with an increase in energy demand, thus, doing away with intermittency and variability of supply as well as environmental challenges.”

Another official from one of the organizations also reported:

“In my view, renewable energy sources contribute to the diversification of the portfolio of supply options and reduce an economy’s vulnerability to price volatility at global, national and local levels.”

Furthermore, it has to be highlighted that compared to fossil fuels, renewable energy sources are more evenly distributed around the globe. This therefore means that increasing their share in a country’s energy portfolio can diminish the dependence on actual energy imports. In this sense, renewable energy deployment can contribute to energy security by diversifying energy sources and diminishing dependence on a limited number of suppliers, therefore, reducing an economy’s vulnerability to price volatility.

On a related note, concerns about limited availability and distribution of resources are a critical component of energy security. *Ceteris paribus*, the more reliant an energy system is on a single energy source, the more susceptible is the energy system to serious disruptions (Sathaye, 2011; Curran, 2012). The ability to generate stable and continuous base load electricity from renewable sources is the holy grail of energy security. Renewable energy can also contribute to increasing the reliability of energy services particularly in remote and rural areas that often suffer from insufficient grid access.

Energy Democracy

The concept of energy democracy advocates that, people, as energy users should have structures and mechanisms that allow them to express their positions. Energy democracy recognizes that replacing fossil-fuel-based infrastructure with renewables is much more than a technological substitution. Stephens (2019) argues that there are social changes associated with this transformation. In this regard, a respondent reported:

“The participation of other stakeholders in energy generation may sit uneasily with the traditional monopolies in the sector, however, the inclusion of other marginalized groups in deploying renewables means diverse organizational and decision-making structures, and providing citizen-led responses to energy needs.”

According to Szulecki & Overland (2020), energy democracy occupies the notion of ‘community energy’ which emphasizes scale and geographic proximity. In this sense, energy democracy embraces the vision of more distributed, locally managed energy systems with an appropriate mix satisfying a society’s needs. Thus, energy democracy reframes energy system change as an opportunity to redistribute political and economic power (Stephens, 2019).

“As much as we would like to turn a blind eye to the transformations happening in the energy sector we cannot run away from the fact that the change is already here. If you look at the National Energy Policy, you’ll see that it provides for other energy producers apart from the State-Owned energy producing company. Accordingly, this is a basis where power production will be decentralized and dispersed” [An official from one of the organizations].

Another respondent also said:

“At this point it is also important to say that the coming in of IPPs in energy generation and transmission has changed the terrain in the energy sector. Indeed, the coming in of IPPs may mean that there is shift away from centralized and fossil fuel-based production sites to more decentralized and distributed systems based on renewables. I would also suggest that this is important because there is a shift in power and politics as energy system development becomes more participative.”

For example, renewable energy can be installed in local, small-scale installations, in a dispersed and distributed way. This enables individuals, households, communities and organizations to own and manage their own energy systems. In essence, this reverses the top-down and the centralized decision-making nature that has characterized energy policy for so long in many countries.

Energy Justice

Energy justice is defined as the fair and equitable application of rights across systems of energy provision, action and associated environmental services (Jenkins et al., 2021). It is a valuable tool in understanding how inequalities such as poverty, gender and social class interact within the context of energy policymaking systems and

infrastructure. It is explained that this narrative goes beyond the need to mitigate climate change threats as it also looks at the distribution of benefits and negative impacts, the proportion of local public goods threatened by development, and the process of decision making, among others (Horst et al., 2021). For example, this narrative might condemn conventional sources of energy because local populations lack high quality energy services—during power outages it is the rural or remote areas that suffer the most compared to urban areas. Surely on this note a respondent reported:

“An important dimension of energy transition is that it should be an equitable one, with due respect not everyone will benefit equally, but there is a need to incorporate distributional considerations into energy or climate policies.”

Another respondent also highlighted:

“There are still innumerable gaps in our collective understanding of how deep inequalities associated with energy are. Currently, not a lot of people have the opportunity to serve as stakeholders in decision-making processes and design effective programs. Seriously, disparities are prevalent in the distribution of benefits and burdens in our energy systems, and such is also the case in the opportunities for engagement and leadership. However, renewable energy transitions should be able to reverse all that and potentially affect low-income communities by alleviating energy insecurity, and extend opportunities for engagement and technological access to disadvantaged groups.”

Another official also said:

“To me, I think energy justice is centered around the notion that all individuals should have access to energy that is affordable, safe, sustainable and be able to sustain a decent life-style, as well as the opportunity to participate in and lead energy decision-making process with the authority to make change.”

Drawing from the reports, one can say that the notion of energy justice is closely linked to the injustices highlighted so far. Indeed, lack of fair and meaningful inclusion of all stakeholders in decision making is part of this narrative. Here the

argument is that conventional energy systems understand energy use only through assumptions by dominant voices, that is, the inability of the local people to pay for electricity is regarded as an ‘implicit’ measure for ‘deserving’ access (Horst et al., 2021). In this regard, energy justice is conceptualized into distributional, procedural and recognition tenets.

More specifically distributional justice refers to the distribution of benefits and risks (who benefits/loses and by how much) across energy supply chains. In turn, the recognition justice tenet seeks to identify who is ignored (non-recognition) and misrepresented (misrecognition). Procedural justice refers to transparency, legitimacy and fairness in decision making process, necessitating inclusive and stakeholder involvement (Horst et al., 2021, Sathaye et al., 2011). By and large, renewable energy sources may provide energy justice due to their size and geographical proximity, offering more equal control over and distribution of electricity production as well as re-allocation of decision-making, expertise, ownership and responsibility (Libertson, 2021).

4.3.2 Renewable Energy Narratives and Political Actors’ Interest in

Malawi

Policy formulation is an activity related to the development and synthesis of alternative solutions to a problem. The term ‘policy’ generally describes the behavior of some or a set of actors involved in an activity both at a level of formulation and implementation. According to Abdullah et al. (2017), the first thing to be done in the formulation of a public policy is deciding what is really the policy issue. Indeed, deciding what matters is sometimes important than deciding a solution or a set of solutions to solve the problem. Actors influence the way policy turns out one way instead of another. Howlett et al. (2009) explain that this behavioral orientation is tempered by the fact that what actors seek and do depends on the political, economic and social structures that surround them. On this note, Holden et al. (2021) is quick to point out that narratives are also important because they form and legitimize policy, and can create the necessary momentum for political movement and changes in behavior. Indeed, a respondent highlighted:

“The way I see it, as a country, we really have problems with our electricity. It doesn’t matter the stories we are telling to make it better. I don’t like poverty in any form. Being a stakeholder in the energy sector, I feel it is our responsibility to deal with this situation. The “Energy for All” narrative is a good initiative. If you may refer to the 2018 National Energy Policy I think it is profoundly embedded therein. It gives us something to think about when formulating policies.”

It is clear from this narration that narratives suggest and justify particular kind of action, strategy and intervention. Surely, this is in line with what Mohan & Topp (2018) explain, that some narratives in turn come to be supported by institutional and political processes, for example, the ‘Energy for All’ narrative in the Malawian National Energy Policy, where it defines and shape pathways, that is, particular directions in which interacting social, technological and environmental systems co-evolve over time. In addition, the narration also confirms that the behavior of policy actors indeed depends on the political, economic, and social structures that surround them (Howlett et al., 2009). It is evident that the ‘Energy for All’ narrative in the National Energy Policy of 2018 sets the tone and particular courses of action, and it even invites other stakeholders like IPPs and international donors into the fray.

The use of narratives in renewable energy and natural resources in general has seen the policy environment in Malawi help identify policy issues, point to problems with existing policies, provide evidence that a program or law is working as intended (or not), and assist policymakers in thinking about the consequences of policy options. For example, environmental narratives have been key in creating significant changes in the new Forestry Act passed in 2019. Here the narrative is that illegal charcoal production is the leading cause of depletion of forest reserves in the country. Thus, the new Forestry Act has introduced stiff penalties for charcoal possession with those found with charcoal facing 10 years in prison or five million Malawi Kwacha (MK5, 000, 000.00) an equivalent of four thousand eight hundred ninety United States Dollars (US\$4,890.00) in fine. The stiff punishment relating to forestry offences come as the majority of Malawians are forced to rely on charcoal and/or firewood for cooking energy due to lack of access to electricity and power outages for those with access to electricity. In addition, liquefied petroleum gas, which is promoted as a

clean energy source is also expensive in Malawi, with one kilogram of gas being sold at MK2,956.00 an equivalent of \$2.89. A respondent said:

“The new Forestry Act is a good law in an ideal situation. In the state we are in at the moment, I don’t know what we are trying to achieve because in as far as the country is concerned, there is not much we can point to as an alternative to charcoal or wood in terms of energy, that is, both for the urban and rural areas. Some alternatives that are there are way above the poverty line for Malawi, which is pegged at around \$1.90 as we are speaking. To say the truth not many people can afford that... and the fines are super mad!!! Think about a common charcoal user, with the fines I think people will struggle to get the commodity. The question we should be asking ourselves is, are we really there now? Because this could have made sense if there were alternatives in place or a better energy-mix so that people can substitute charcoal for whatever source of energy might be there. Mind you, the said substitute should be accessible as well” [Ref. #3].

Clearly, for most policy issues there are many competing narratives jostling for center stage, and from a rational choice perspective, actors choose narratives that best advance their interests (Boswell et al., 2011). In this light, with the divergent views that unfolded after the new Forestry Act was enforced it might be argued that it was motivated by self-interests, utility maximization, or more simply put, goal fulfilment. Accordingly, Petraca (1991) explains that by assuming self-interests to be an empirically established component of human nature, rational choice supports and perpetuates a political life which is antithetical to important tenets of normative democratic theory. This argument is in line with what Boswell et al. (2011) put across, that as part of the neo-institutionalist turn, narratives should influence public debates and political decision-making. In this light, problems do not simply flow from the objective ‘facts’ of the situation, nor can policy preferences be inferred from objective rational interests. Instead, both problems and preferred solutions should be constructed by different actors (politicians, academics, the media, et cetera), drawing on available ideational resources or patterns of thought. Considering the new Forestry Act in the purview of rational choice offers an incoherent account of democratic

citizenship and it produces a political system which shows a constant bias against political change and pursuit of the public interest.

Another respondent quickly retorted:

“I think the policymakers do not have the interests of the general public at heart, look at some of the policies or laws that have been made. It is like “akupangira kuti azungu kapena anaake awatame” (international donors or someone higher should praise them) or something, at the end of the day ordinary Malawians are the ones adversely affected. The energy problem is for all of us to solve. I am not denying that charcoal burning is bad for our environment, but there should be an energy alternative and also the fines should be considerable. I also think that it could have been right if different stakeholders were engaged (this includes the charcoal producers and sellers and even the users) to get a full perspective. I believe they made the Act without much consideration, they are punishing ordinary Malawians” [Ref. #4].

It can be said that the narration above supports that rather than the self-interests promoted by policymakers, policy narratives encourage debate and learning. This argument is articulated by Boswell et al. (2011), they explain that narratives have a special dynamic which distinguishes them from other sorts of claims mobilized in public debates, notably claims about values or interests. On this note, Hampton (2009) also argues that narratives allow the public involvement in a policy space. This can be achieved through the juxtaposition of lay and expert opinion and consideration of how power differentials influence the expression of opinions through the examination of discourses expressed in narrative form. Indeed, the different views drawn after the new Forestry Act was enforced compelled the government to respond. The Government of Malawi has put in place strategies to ensure that charcoal remains part of the energy mix. Accordingly, the strategies include licensed charcoal, briquettes and sustainable charcoal pellets. Furthermore, the government continues to provide conducive environment to private sector investment in the development of alternative sources through establishment of various funding channels like the Malawi Cooking Fund under the modern cooking for health forests project. Certainly, story-lines can be used to address the lacuna in energy policy debates and capture the

interconnections between social and technical pathways of change and their co-evolution as in the case of the new Forest Act in Malawi.

A surge in energy generation projects is evidence that the energy security narrative is currently dominant. Other financial supporters of this narrative include the UN, through the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, which seeks to widen access to modern energy, improve energy efficiency and double the share of renewable energy by 2030 (IRENA, 2018). On this note, there is a strong connection between SDG 7 and a majority of SDGs, and this illustrates how energy is central to fostering the pathways necessary to keep the world well under 2 °C of warming and meet a wide range of targets, which is the goal for most UN organizations including some international donors. This is in line with what Holden et al. (2021) say, that narratives are not merely neutral descriptions. Dominant narratives capture how stories and rhetoric coalesce into stable meaning systems, institutional practices, and power structures that can shape, constrain or shape agency. In other words, policy may become to be shaped by dominant narratives along with the actors' interests. Indeed, on this note one respondent said:

“In policymaking we do not just look at what we want as a country, most of the times we look at the international agreements that we are party to. At other times we also look at who is behind the said policy. You will often find out that for most policies, there are international organizations and donors that are ready to fund the policy projects and they also bring policy experts to oversee both the formulation and implementation. They are also immensely involved with the intricacies of policy formulation to the extent they even book venues for policy deliberations.”

Against a background of countries pursuing their self-interests and rationality, it is common for countries to incline toward a certain dominant narrative or idea because they are part of an international treaty or agreement. For example, the Kyoto Protocol commits state parties to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Accordingly, this has shaped policies towards decarbonization and climate change mitigation in different countries. On this note, Wolmer (2006) argues that narratives reduce the room for maneuver or ‘policy space’ of policy makers, that is, their ability to think about new alternatives or different approaches. Furthermore, Crow & Jones

(2018) argue that people, by nature, are inclined to impose meaning on the world and that they do so by relying on information shortcuts (heuristics). Heuristics provide frames or constructs for problem solving and are expressed in narrative style. On this note, Lowndes (2016) citing Herbert Simon argues that policy makers ‘satisfice’ rather than undertake a fully rational evaluation of the costs and benefits of different options, due to both informational insufficiencies and cognitive limitations. In this sense, narratives promoted by international organizations and other donors may offer policymakers parsimony and efficiency in decision-making, that is, constraining the range of choices that policy makers are likely to consider when formulating policies. Certainly, policy narratives as heuristics make policy actors to easily distil and reflect a particular understanding on policy issues—which in the end may be more or less prone to favor international cooperation.

Indeed, according to Howlett et al. (2009) international actors vary considerably in their ability to influence domestic policies, and this to a significant extent, is the result of differences in their resource endowments. Barnett & Finnemore (2004) explain that the strongest source of authority of international organizations is the conditionality which requires states to alter their domestic policies in exchange for funding. Such is the case with regard to the IMF and the World Bank. A good example of aid conditionalities include the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) where the Bretton Woods institutions imposed conditionalities on the Global South. On this issue, Stiglitz (2000) argues that it can be said that the IMF likes to go about its business without asking too many questions. In theory, the fund supports democratic institutions in the nations it assists. In practice, it undermines the democratic process by imposing policies. Officially of course, the IMF doesn’t ‘impose’ anything. It ‘negotiates’ the conditions for receiving aid. However, all the power in the negotiations is on one side—the IMF’s—and the fund rarely allows sufficient time for broad consensus building or even widespread consultations with either parliaments or civil society. It can therefore be explained that even international actors have interests that they would like to promote in domestic policies. This is in line with Dodlova (2020) who argues that international donors exhibit a coercive nature when it comes to policy diffusion in developing countries. On this note, not all policy actors are equal in policymaking processes. In fact, international actors, with their large proportions of funding are perceived as having leverage in policy decision-

making. In other words, their issues are likely to reach the agenda because the bias of the political system allows them to be raised. According to Chinsinga (2007), in Malawi, deficiencies in expertise among government officials have invariably created a favourable atmosphere for donors involved to dominate in various ways. They are thus pushing for their own ideologically driven conceptions of policies including specific programs to be a part thereof. To this end, decisions taken by donors have effectively settled policy.

However argued, Simmons et al. (2008) explain that there are times where states may also simply 'follow the leader' and emulate, that is, imitate the most powerful or successful actors. In this case emulation may be deliberate, as a means to increasing one's standing in the world without significant costs, or a process of more 'blindly' adopting the beliefs and behavioral patterns of the surrounding culture, without actively assessing the merits of those beliefs and behaviors or the material costs and benefits of conforming to them. It is evident that even in this case, 'implicitly' there is some narrative which the imitating state is trying to emulate. In addition, the sheer number of intergovernmental forums by government ministers which has proliferated in recent years, enable policymakers from various countries to interact more than ever and facilitate government-to-government learning and policy convergence (Drezner, 2005; Boushey, 2010). This in essence means that the policymakers are exposed to different narratives which may justify particular kind of action, strategy and intervention, thus enabling them to make decisions in the face of uncertainty and complexity. In this vein, apart from donors and international organizations using economic and other sanctions to encourage cooperation to certain narratives, diffusion of policies can simply involve government-to-government transfer of ideas, norms and best practices.

Notwithstanding the nature of national policy subsystems affect international actors' role in the policy process (Howlett et al., 2009) The argument here is that international actors can be expected to be influential in sectors with fragmented subsystems, because such fragmentations allow them greater opportunity for intervention (see also Chinsinga, 2010). Conversely, international actors find it difficult to influence policies where the associated subsystem is coherent and united in opposition to external intervention (Howlett et al., 2009). A good example for this,

is the oil industry's reluctance to the Kyoto Protocol plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, where affluent nations like Canada, the United States of America and Australia undermined the UN's efforts to limit climate change by scaling back greenhouse gas emissions. Considering this, the most conducive situation for international actors is, of course, when the subsystem is coherent and in favor of external involvement—in such instances the international actors can be considered to be an integral part of the domestic policy process (ibid).

It has to be highlighted also that the presence of particular actors in the policy process and the interests they pursue are often determined by the nature of the organization within which they operate. For example, in capitalist states, there is enormous pressure on the government to make policies that ensure hospitable conditions for continued, and expanded, capital investment (Stiglitz, & Rosengard, 2015). Howlett et al. (2009) explain that in capitalist states businesses and firms attempt to influence government directly and, indirectly through their membership in various forms of business associations. Business associations among the many interest groups found in capitalist societies, enjoy an unmatched capacity to affect public policy, given the reliance of states in capitalist societies on businesses for their revenues and for overall levels of social well-being. For example, in Malawi, considering issues of energy disruptions, the impact of electricity on productivity and growth has featured in renewable energy narratives. The argument is that frequent blackouts adversely affect Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs). This has prompted the government to come up with energy policy strategies that include energy mixes and the involvement of IPPs and donors to overcome the problem.

Finally, it is not every time that a policy has to be developed from scratch. Most of the times policymakers use past policy choices and the ideas embodied in those choices. Campbell (2002) says this may stem from programmatic ideas that facilitate policymaking among elites by specifying how to solve particular problems. In this sense, programmatic ideas are precise guidelines about how already-existing institutions and instruments should be used in specific situations according to the principle of well-established paradigms. Thus, the most successful programs provide the clearest roadmaps out of the troublesome or uncertain policy situations. Along with this line of thinking a respondent highlighted:

“I don’t think policymakers understand scientific facts, you look at them and you are certain that I think right now I am speaking to myself. It is like they need information or ideas that do not deviate very much from past policies. I think this has to be on the back of a policy stakeholder when proposing new narratives or other information.”

Another respondent also said:

“The policies that we make are just an improvement of what has been there... I don’t think we can start from scratch. That would mean taking a lot of time and resources, and I don’t think policymakers would be happy with that.”

It can be argued that the narrations by the respondents are in line with the incremental model of public policy making which explains that since bargaining requires distributing limited resources among various participants, it is easier to continue with the existing pattern of distribution rather than try to negotiate new ways that might turn out to be radical. Accordingly, since the benefits and the costs of present arrangements are known to policy actors, unlike the uncertainties surrounding new arrangements, securing agreements on major changes is more difficult. The result is either continuation of the status quo or agreement only to make small changes to it (Howlett et al., 2009).

This argument is also confirming the tenets of path-dependency theory which promotes the assertion that “history matters”. In fact, the programmatic antecedents and previous decisions by policy actors while limiting the range of choices available to them, also help policy makers understand the prolonged stability of path-dependent nature of public policy. This therefore means that once programmatic and paradigmatic ideas are institutionalized, they create constituencies that defend them whenever they come under attack. In this way it becomes difficult to change the way things are done, and new narratives may not be accommodated as policy makers can only make small adjustments to what they are familiar with.

Furthermore, the standard operating procedures of bureaucracies also tend to promote the continuation of existing practices. The methods by which bureaucrats identify options and the procedures and criteria for choice are often laid out in advance, inhibiting innovation and perpetuating existing arrangements (Howlett et al., 2009).

Likewise, these may constrain alternative pathways that policy actors could have considered.

4.3.3 Renewable Energy Narratives and Policy Actors' Decisions in

Malawi

An essential characteristic of any polity is the way that different groups participate in the process of policy formulation. In most societies, the number of potential public problems far exceeds the capabilities of the decision-making institutions to process them. To this end, Cobb et al. (1976) explain that issues or their proponents must compete for a place on the decision-making agenda. Crow and Jones (1998) say that policy actors wield narratives to help them achieve their goals, communicate problems and solutions. Narratives create realities, they are imbued with ideas that influence behavior and shape cultures. Narratives play a fundamental role in the process of creating energy futures as they bridge the past, the present and the future (Garha et al., 2022). To this end, it can be suggested that renewable energy policy actors morph and define the state of events according to their inclinations on certain narratives, which in a way constrain the range of possible alternatives available to them.

Energy security as fundamental to a country's lifestyle and economic performance is a powerful narrative. In this narrative, reliance on a single, or limited energy sources and over-centralized power generation poses a number of other risks, but particularly the susceptibility to disruptions. To this end, it is argued by Holden et al. (2021) that the extent to which renewable energy sources contribute to the diversification portfolio and reduce an economy's susceptibility to energy disruptions represents opportunities to enhance energy security at the global, national as well as at the local level. Indeed, an official from one of the organizations said:

“Through its direct link to a country's economic fabric, a country's energy profile is a significant determinant of its energy politics. In Malawi, when talking about the energy policies or just energy in general ‘energy security’ always comes up. It is an issue that everyone is aware of, both policymakers and ordinary people. I don't think policy makers will dare to miss that one, it will be a mistake.”

Drawing from the above response it is evident that policies or strategies for renewable energy in Malawi may be shaped by narratives. Surely, one of the problems knuckling down the energy sector and even other sectors in Malawi's economy is that of energy reliability. It is argued that rural electrification and urbanization stretches the existing grid while heavy reliance on large hydro is often constrained by drought and low water levels. These factors combined lead to intermittent power supply that adversely affect industrial production and provision of socio-economic services as well as deterring foreign investment (Taulo et al., 2015).

It needs not to be overlooked that narratives influence how policy actors understand issues and the values they ascribe to them. This means that meaning is socially constructed and some actors have more capacity to influence this social construction than others (Dyzeck, 2005). Indeed, this study found out that there are a range of actors that intend to maintain the status quo, they contend that renewables offer a little in the way of energy security and reliability and hence they cannot address the current energy deficit. Their line of argument is that because renewables are weather dependent, for example solar and wind power, they are intermittent, that is, they promise so much and yet deliver so little. Against this line of thinking, a majority of actors believe that energy security relies on significant infrastructure investment, both to address infrastructure decline (at old generation power plants) and inefficiencies and to accommodate distributed and dispersed power generation in the form of renewable energy. However, while most agree that such investment is critical, the tenor and shape of this investment remains contested.

However argued, it seems that the energy security narrative is influencing policymakers to suggest particular kind of action, strategy and intervention. For example, The Agenda 2063 for Malawi recognizes energy security challenges and proposes a continuous investment in the energy sector beyond hydro, which is currently the main source of energy. In essence, this entails tapping into the vast renewable energy resources besides hydro which include; solar, wind, and modern biofuels. Conveniently, this will enable a reduction in the unsustainable use of biomass energy that is contributing to environmental degradation such as high deforestation, desertification and soil erosion. Furthermore, as explained by Taulo et al. (2015), clean energy from renewable energy sources will also reduce indoor

pollution as the use of wood, charcoal and crop residue causes severe impacts directly to the users, especially rural women. Moreover, the task of gathering traditional supplies of fuel wood is time consuming, a burden that is mostly borne by women and children who are then diverted from other activities such as education and farming that could eventually have improved their productivity and living conditions (ibid). In this case, the development of other sources of renewable energies in the country will not only address the issue of energy security but also environmental conservation, climate change and gender issues. Considering the extent to how energy security affects different facets of the society's fabric, this narrative is more likely to be linked in the public's mind with the reasonable expectation of continuous supply. Certainly, keeping the lights on, thus acts as a powerful impetus not only of secure and reliable energy supply, but also of a very reasonably costed one.

It is also important to take note that an actor's capacity to advance their interests, relies on effective construction and dissemination of narratives. Curran (2012) argues that it is at the level of narratives that energy and climate policies are revealed. As a result, narratives help shape the profile of renewable energy in a country in important ways, ultimately impacting the renewable energy sector's standing, status and future. Accordingly, renewable energy transition is fundamentally a political struggle as effects to shift to renewable energy sources will not prove effective without confronting and destabilizing dominant systems of energy power, let alone the narratives that maintain the status quo. Along this line of thinking, the Malawian energy sector has gone through important reform efforts recently, including the unbundling of the national utility, the Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) and the establishment of Electricity Generation Company of Malawi (EGENCO). The restructuring of Malawi's power market is underway, with strong investor interest and political will for Independent Power Producers (IPPs) to enter the market. Moving forward, there is high potential for solar and new hydro technologies to enter into the power market.

Generally, with the concerns about climate change mitigations and energy shortages or access deficits, the '*Energy for All*' narrative provides a win-win solution that can simultaneously benefit the economy, the environment and the human well-being. According to IRENA (2018), this narrative is embodied in the SDGs under goal

number 7 which calls for ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030. Certainly, at the backbone of this narrative is an idea that sustainable development is not possible without sustainable energy. Taalo et al. (2015) indicated that in Malawi, most people lack electricity and they rely on wood, charcoal and agricultural wastes for cooking and heating. This is a major barrier to eradicating poverty and building shared prosperity. However, the case is different in industrialized countries whose energy problem is not shortages or access deficits but one of waste and pollution because of their reliance on fossil fuels and nuclear power (Sathaye, et al., 2011). The key to both challenges is to provide sustainable energy for all—energy that is accessible, cleaner and more efficient. The challenge requires insightful knowledge to shape effective policies. According to French et al (2017), policy narratives always have something to do with policy problems and are situated in specific policy contexts. As a matter of fact, Holden et al. (2021) explain that policy narratives are important because they form and legitimize policy and behaviour, and can create necessary momentum for political movement. In line with this argument, a respondent reported:

“Interestingly, the narratives may come but at the end of the day we also have a vision and set targets as a nation, we want everyone to have access to electricity at some point, we want everyone to have sustainable energy at some point. So, the coming in of these narratives, specifically, the ‘Sustainable Energy for All’ in a way assist the vision that Malawi has. I have to say that because this narrative vouches for other sources of energy apart from the existing grid, it makes us easy to believe that, yes, we can achieve rural electrification through mini-grids.”

Another respondent said:

“I think narratives are a huge part of what policymakers do. In my own understanding I don’t think they can work without narratives as they are so important to policymaking. You consider the ‘Energy for All’ idea for example, it is like a reference leaf not only for Malawi but other countries too.”

The main takeaway here is that ‘*Sustainable Energy for All*’ has the potential to contribute to other SDGs related to livelihoods, education, health, water, employment and gender equality. As a result, people want their energy sources to be clean and cheap, they want to avoid pollution and environmental harms, and they want to keep the cost low. An improvement of the electricity system is of the essence if affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly energy is to be provided to the public, and renewable energy is a great example of an opportunity to do that. To this end, the ‘*Energy for All*’ narrative seems to drive the transition to renewable energies in both developed and developing countries. It seems that behind the renewable energy policies that different countries are adopting there is a narrative.

It can be confirmed that the Government in Malawi is making strides by putting in place energy strategies that include specific Acts to mitigate both climate change effects and the impacts of unsteady energy supply. For example, the Rural Electrification Act makes provision for the promotion, funding, management and regulation of rural electrification. Specifically, more favorable rules are laid out for renewable energy resources, including in terms of finance (GoM, 2004b). Furthermore, the involvement of IPPs, donors and other players in the energy sector to achieve energy security ensures continuous expansion of renewable energy deployment in the power sector. Indeed, in the case of IPPs, the Government through the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) negotiates tariffs, which are a kind of production-based incentives. Thus, making sure that renewable energy technologies can operate in the system on a level playing field with other technologies, facilitating innovation, supply and consumption of renewable energy in all end-uses.

Due to the fact that policymakers make sense out of narratives in order to arrive at decisions it will not always be possible to achieve full rationality in practice. In fact, narratives create short-cuts to the decision-making process. Furthermore, even if a decision-maker wished to adopt maximizing decisions, those might not be possible due to limitations in information and time. Frederickson et al. (2012) explain that this form of decision-making would only generate maximal results only if all possible alternatives were assessed before a decision was made. This is a luxury that policy actors cannot afford as solutions lurk for problems and windows of opportunity do not stay open for too long (see Howlett et al., 2009; Dye, 2014). Furthermore, the

cognitive limits of the policymakers constrain them to consider almost an infinite number of possible options leading them to focus only on a limited number of alternatives that they deem were likely, or probable or feasible. Such pre-decisional choices can be made based on ideological, professional, cultural or similar grounds, if not randomly. In this case, Holden et al. (2021) explain that narratives often get validity despite the fact that they simplify complex issues and processes. This simplification is seductive in that it sidesteps fuzziness and suggests a program of action. This is what make narratives appealing to policy actors, sweeping the public along.

It can therefore be said that the rational model of policymaking fails to consider the complexities and intricacies of social and cultural elements that affect information acquisition as well as the evidence of decision-making ‘interface.’ Therefore, knowing more about the merits and demerits of policy alternatives will not necessarily increase understanding nor lead to action. In fact, because policymakers attach cognitive and emotional shortcuts to thoughts and actions, bombarding them with evidence can be less effective. Surely, narrative information can be more useful than statistical data, partly because the latter can be seen as too complex, not policy relevant, tedious or lacking context sensitivity.

Another reason why the rational model of decision-making cannot work in practice hinges on heuristics. These heuristics include the use of historical analogies, a preference for incremental policies, the desire for consensus among competing actors, and the desire to avoid blame for potential policy outcomes. Considering that policy decisions are often value-driven and political and not just evidence-based choices, and that policymakers operate on a different hierarchy of evidence compared to researchers, policymakers prefer information that is concise, appealing and relevant to current debates (Fadlallah et al., 2019). Thus, the individual decision-maker uses a number of policymaking shortcuts—satisficing instead of maximizing, not looking too far ahead, reducing a complex environment to a series of simplified conceptual models. Indeed, narratives play a crucial part to inform decision-makers on policy pathways and actions.

4.4 Building a Policy Agenda

The process of agenda setting is a critical moment in the production of public policies, as it has great impact on its development and the result to be achieved. It is also a question of power, because it involves defining subjects that will be the focus of policymakers' attention, as well as affecting the choices that will be made later throughout the decision-making process (Capella, 2016). The policy agenda is composed of demands that policymakers agree to consider. It is not the sum of all political demands, and is ranked according to the political priorities of the policy decision-makers. Multiple policy actors with varied interests, values and ideas can try to get their issues on the policy agenda. Consequently, agenda setting is not a rational process, but a struggle over the definition of the problem as all interests are not equally represented in this struggle, and some problems are more likely to reach the agenda than others (Dye, 2014; Kingdon, 2014). According to Howlett et al. (2009), 'non-decisions' are the decisions to avoid considering certain issues.

4.4.1 Building Renewable Energy Policy Agenda in Malawi

It is argued that stakeholder engagement throughout the policy processes is essential for understanding the needs of different groups and communities. The rationale is that since these actors have different priorities, they may therefore increase equity in policy. On this basis, Chinsinga (2007b) explains that the involvement of stakeholders should be an integral part of the policy process in order to stimulate public debate at political, technocratic and community levels. Furthermore, this gives additional legitimacy by providing evidence to support and shape policies and increase accountability of the government to stakeholders, achieving greater policy implementation as a result (Masefield et al., 2021). However argued, it seems that in Malawi, in terms of the national energy policy in general there was not much of an engagement with stakeholders as the role of initiating policy proposals was dominated by either the Department of Energy Affairs or donors through consultations or policy research. Indeed, an official from one of the organizations articulated:

“I was privileged to be one of the persons that was tasked with the development of the National Energy Policy of 2018. We sought an international consultant but we also had a local one, their reports were scrutinized and from there a draft policy was developed. Since policy

development is not a one man show, at some point other stakeholders were involved (for example, NGOs, private investors, the academia and think tanks) for their contributions in the draft policy through policy workshops. There is a direction that as a country we would like to go and views were heard and debated upon. After that there was another meeting that was conducted but this time around it had few 'important' stakeholders who analysed the final draft. Rarely do we have individuals or companies with their policy proposals. However, if it happens that they have brought one, this is analysed in the lenses of the policy direction (by technocrats) and their views may be taken on board or not."

Another one also reported:

"I think the Department of Energy Affairs looks at the different energy needs and challenges from different communities, and because it is a policy issue they engage with other stakeholders as well in order to tap into different perspectives on the problems at hand. However, the initiation comes from within the Ministry although in some instances you have stakeholders coming to the Ministry with policy proposals—but these are not usual."

According to the reports by the respondents it can be deduced that policymaking is not equal for all participants. It is also clear that the Malawian case of policymaking in the energy sector very much resembles the inside access model proposed by Cobb et al. (1976). In fact, the inside access model describes a situation in which it is easier to achieve both formal agenda status and implementation of the proposed policy with fewest changes. It is explained that policy originates within a governmental agency (for example, the DoEA), or within a group which has easy and frequent access to political decision makers. Thus, excluding the participation of the public. The explanation here is that the issue may stand to be defeated when it is expanded to the public as such discussions are done in a relatively private setting. In addition, bureaucrats are also often afraid that the public will misunderstand a technical problem if it becomes a matter of public debate.

It is also evident from the respondents that there are times when issues may come from outside policy actors. This is also in line with what Cobb et al. (1976) pointed

out that the models of agenda setting are just conceptual rather than empirical models. In practice, most occurrences of agenda building will certainly be more complex, combining models as well as levels of agendas. Thus, since the models of agenda building may occur in various combinations during the history of any issue, many permutations of agendas and agenda building are possible. This is to say that it is possible to have all models of agenda building on an issue depending on the level at which the issue is at (see Cobb et al., 1976).

Over and above, Chinsinga (2007b) says that in Malawi the government is failing to provide leadership and technical guidance and direction to the policy process. The apparent government's failure to steer the policy process gives at times the impression that it is being driven almost entirely by development partners. This is due to lack of capacity among government agencies about policy issues in particular and handling of policy processes in general. It is argued that most leading government agencies are not familiar with the nuances of the issue at hand. Deficiencies in expertise among government officials therefore create an invariably favourable atmosphere for donors involved to dominate the policy process in various ways, allowing them to even push for their ideological perspectives as well as certain programs to be an integral part of policies. This view is echoed by Masefield et al. (2021) who explained that because donors provide a large portion of funding, they are perceived as having a lot of leverage in policy decision-making. To this extent, most of the stakeholder workshops are considered tokenistic. It is reported by Masefield et al. (2021) that events are cosmetic and aimed at coercing stakeholders to rubberstamp an already made policy. In fact, there is no substantial change from the policy drafts that are made despite people submitting views during stakeholder workshops.

Bearing in mind that agenda setting is fundamentally a process that politically allocates attention and also noting that the impact on agenda is contingent upon time and the role that policy actors play, individuals or groups work to get an issue on the agenda in different ways (Cobbs et al., 1976). In this case, power might be the most important element of agenda setting. Thus, actionable priorities reflect the power of some groups or individuals over others in making their voices heard (or preventing others from being heard) and by implication turn their own parochial concerns into public problems that need to be collectively addressed. This is reflected in policy

processes in Malawi where international actors exert influence on the government at the central level, including the extent of stakeholder engagement. The government is also perceived of having a very small group of specific stakeholders who they engage repeatedly in the policy development process. This may be seen as both directly including and excluding other stakeholders. Accordingly, this shows characteristics of elitist theory which contends that policy is dominated by a privileged minority. In this case, public policy reflects the values and interests of these elites—not the general public because elites wield considerable influence even in the relatively mundane realm of day-to-day policymaking.

4.4.2 Strategies in Agenda Building

In a policy environment with many policymakers and potential audiences, agenda setting is about exercising power to generate attention for some issues over others. Kingdon (2014) highlights that it is at the agenda setting stage where some issues are organized into politics and others are organized out. Accordingly, policy actors find themselves in situations where they find resistance and competition from other policy stakeholders. In such contested contexts policy actors do not only develop and seek attention for their issues and solutions, they also devise strategies that are aimed at gaining attention and building credibility to manoeuvre out rival solutions and opposition players (Johannesson & Qvist, 2020). Many of these strategies can be categorized as attention and support-seeking activities. Other widely used strategies also include various rhetorical moves such as the framing of solutions and problems. In terms of strategies at the agenda setting stage of renewable energy in Malawi, a respondent reported:

“I do not specifically think that there a lot of strategies that policy actors in the country’s energy sector may apply, occasionally though, I have seen some using their networks to influence policy processes” [Ref. #1].

The explanation here is that policy problems are complex and policy actors need to work with different people as policy formulation progresses. Furthermore, due to the fact that energy problems affect other sectors as well, the emphasis on networking is imperative as the problem-solving structures of traditional government may prove insufficient to match the policy demands of a modern state. For example, while

borders between different levels of governmental units and different policy sectors are administratively defined, policy problems are characterized by their interdependent and cross-scale nature. In this sense, the establishment of networks, stretching beyond the formal hierarchies, is considered to be an imperative task for public administration. Historically, this is probably a reaction to the traditional view of government as a top-down entity, indicated by the failure of public policy to deal with the vagaries of modern state, and by the failure of the rational models to explain a multi-actor involvement in public policy.

It is also explained by Marsh and Smith (2000) that policy networks are opaque relationships that exist between institutions and individuals aiming to influence government on different issues. Furthermore, according to Johanneson and Qvist (2020), policy actors' interface between different levels and indeed across agencies of the state allow them to have a knowledge advantage. This edge in expertise makes policy actors powerful and helps them to win allies and to influence policy processes even in the face of powerful opposition. Thus, policy network is a concept which describes a dispersed form of public management, reifying power relations.

However, policy actors also need to be good at networking, trust building and identifying linking strategies to make connections with other actors. It is argued that building and maintaining coalitions of support around a policy issue can create a consensus for policy change and improve the chance of the policy being adopted (Gunn, 2017). In addition, at a later stage of policy formulation, policy actors may need to remove potential barriers to reform and overcome resistance. Thus, policy networking proves to be an important strategy because individuals or groups are able to seek and build support around a policy issue. In this case, as government interest grows, individuals or groups can work closely with those inside government, such as bureaucrats and ministers, thus, impacting on policy directly or indirectly. Furthermore, if policy actors in these positions possess sufficient power, they can use policy design strategies that may eliminate the institutional processes of negotiating policy suggestions by turning an open access structure into a closed system. Johanneson and Qvist (2020) indicate that the purpose of such a strategy is to organize opposition out of policy formulation process.

It can be argued that policy networks are the hallmark of negotiations in policymaking and as a result they influence which policies are implemented and how. Policy networks are therefore critical for policymaking in democratic societies. This view point is in line with the tenets of the political model of decision-making, where decision-making is seen as a personalized bargaining process, driven by the agendas of participants rather than rational processes (Turpin & Marais, 2004). The argument here is that people differ on policy goals, values and the relevance of information. The decision-making process never ends but remains a continuous battle between different coalitions. After one group wins a round of battle, other parties might regroup or become even more determined to win the next round. Influence and power are wielded in a deliberate manner and to further self-interests. To this end, the goals of the coalitions are defined by self-interests than by what is good for the society as a whole.

One respondent articulated:

“In my case, I think a very good strategy is to control participation, because if you do that you limit the number of opponents to one’s cause. However, this has to be done in a crafty manner.”

The argument here is that as much as gaining attention is a crucial element in the agenda-setting process, mobilization of interests has to be directed at those constituents whose interests matter in the policy issue. This is done to avoid drag and therefore losing political momentum on an issue as windows of opportunity do not remain open for long. So, by involving participants who support a policy issue and excluding participants who oppose it, political actors can be able to sail through the agenda. In order to do so, they need to convince their potential supporters that they should devote time and effort to their cause, while, ideally also discouraging potential opponents from becoming involved.

The dynamics of participation in policymaking are crucially mediated by institutional factors. Thus, policy is made in their distinctive institutional arenas or in the terminology of Baumgartner and Jones (1993), ‘venues.’ This therefore means that participation depends on the venue in which an issue is taken up. Each institutional venue is home to a different image of the same question. For example, in ministries of

finance, tobacco may be seen primarily as an important source of tax revenue, whereas in ministries of health it is likely to be seen as a source of disease. Since certain images of an issue are better perceived in some venues than others, policy actors who want policy change try to have an issue reassigned to a venue that shares their definition of a specific issue. Johanneson and Qvist (2020) explain that this is **venue shopping**, and it is basically an attempt to secure the most favorable conditions for advancing a specific policy formulation. Thus, venue shopping gives policymakers an opportunity to keep issues on the agenda of government by shopping among various government institutions and urging them to address the issue at hand even when others are ignoring it.

It can be said that venue shopping is grounded in the ideas of institutionalism as policy actors would want to change policy venues on the basis of frustration within existing institutional venues—which tend to constrain the choice of solutions and the extent to which they can be implemented. Indeed, certain policy actors may find it difficult to place their ideas on the agenda due to entrenched interests, values and norms that aim at maintaining the status quo, as such they may opt for a change in venue. Furthermore, the process of stability in the institutional venues also encourages mobilization elsewhere in the system. Indeed, the rules and standard operating procedures in institutional venues result in routine and repetitive nature of decision-making. In this sense it is difficult for new policy actors and their issues to gain access to the agenda because most attention tend to focus on areas of expertise as well as on ways that do not deviate substantially from the standard operating procedures.

Venue shopping can also be looked at as a rational choice where actors choose a venue that maximize their utility. In this sense, venue shopping is a strategic move where the policy actors select alternative institutional venues that are most conducive to the achievement of their goals. To achieve the desired outcomes, it is assumed that policy actors work through a number of alternatives in a logical sequence, calculating the costs and benefits. In other words, venue shopping is done based on calculations and perceptions made by policy actors about actual or perceived transaction costs. However, according to Ley and Weber (2016), rational theorists grounded in bounded rationality would argue otherwise. Their argument is that policy actors have cognitive limitations, imperfect information and that coalitions will seek to utilize their

resources efficiently (and strategically), to produce the most policy benefits for the cost incurred, when pursuing policy change in the context of multiple venues.

Furthermore, venue shopping may also be looked at through the lenses of power. Policymaking is a struggle between individuals and groups with competing interests, some in favor of change and others opposed to it, depending on their interests and ideas. For example, in situations where a suitable venue is not available, policy actors may modify the range of venues in order to create one that is better suited to their purposes. This is not a politically neutral undertaking as one has to look at the dimensions of institutional power. Indeed, policy venues are not neutral, but are themselves shaped by power relations, which both surround and enter them. As a result, policy actors may opt to shop for venues where their interests, values and ideas are aligned. Ideally, to make sense of participation in any given venue, power relations that permeate and produce these venues need to be considered. Accordingly, this is why when looking at venues it is also helpful to look at the forms of power within them. In fact, Gaventa (2005; 2006) explain that power has to be analyzed in its multiple forms, levels and spaces (venues), and the ways in which these interact.

The study also found out that sometimes policy actors may deliberately control the flow of information and limiting access to closed circuits, thereby manipulating and dominating the decision-making process. For example, a respondent pointed out that government agencies and other key players may deliberately send policy draft documents close to the stakeholders' meeting date, which means there was little time for them to coordinate with network members and prepare a detailed response. This may also inspire bias as the pre-reading of policy documents may make a policy actor to change a point of view on some issues. In a way, it is like limiting the scope of the agenda to the issues contained in the draft only.

In addition to mobilizing supporters and controlling participation prospective agenda-setters need to frame an issue in such a way that it arouses interest. According to Princern (2011), this may be done through 'big words' and through 'small steps.' A respondent from one of the organizations articulated:

“I would say that the way problems and solutions are framed has a significant bearing on how they are processed thereafter. As a policymaker you have to

be clever enough to construct an idea around a policy issue, make sure the idea interprets a problem in a particular way and it needs to include a rationale for policy change. For example, renewable energy policy can be connected to energy injustice or health and well-being.”

Framing with big words consists of tying in with established overall values that are held to be central to a society’s purpose and identity. For example, an issue of energy scarcity can be framed as an injustice, thus affecting widely held values of human rights and economic welfare. A closely related strategy on this one is to tie the problem with stated policy priorities and commitments. In case of renewable energy, a problem can be tied by the desire to achieve sustainable energy for all which is accessible, reliable and clean.

However, this study also found out that using ‘big words’ is not the only way in which an issue can gain the attention of policymakers. Often policy actors gradually build up interest of an issue through ‘small steps’—an approach that stresses on the significance of moral components and/or symbolic meanings. This approach, thus, stresses on the technical aspects of an issue and gradually builds up support in a certain policy area (Princen, 2011). There are several ‘small steps’ that can be taken, often in conjunction. One way to start a debate on an issue is to do a study. Indeed, in terms of energy policy, studies have been referred to as a source of evidence for taking a certain direction. Another low-key way to bring an issue to the attention of policymakers is to organize conferences. Evidently, in Malawi and beyond conferences about climate change and climate mitigations have not left the public podium, the conferences are ongoing.

It may be argued that issue framing supports the narrative framework of policymaking, as issues do not have inherent properties that make them more or less likely to be seen as problems or to be expanded. Rather, political actors deliberately portray them in calculated ways to gain support for their side. In addition, policy actors do not simply accept causal models that are given from science or popular culture or any other source. They compose stories that describe harms and difficulties, attribute them to actions of other individuals or organizations, and thereby claim the right to invoke government power to stop the harm.

4.5 Policy Actors' Resources and Competition for Political Turf at Agenda

Setting Stage

Political agenda-setting looks into the factors which influence the fact that one social problem attracts the attention of the actors concerned (and thus becomes a public problem), while another is not subject to public debate or state intervention (Cobb et al., 1976; Knoepfel et al., 2011). Given different resource bases, groups work to get an issue on the agenda in different ways. In reality a policy is not created or realized in a void. From the outset, the available resources exert a significant influence on the intermediate and final results of a policy. Even before the first interventions plans have been drafted, politicians and private actors already see themselves as confronted with the 'conditions of production' for a proposed policy action; they find themselves on a 'building site' with limited but necessary resources for the structuring and 'construction' of public policy (Knoepfel et al., 2011). In simple terms, resources are crucial for public policy making. On this, a respondent argued:

"In my view, I think policymaking is about the politics in there, if you don't have resources then you lose. No one would like losing, so policy actors have resources at their disposal that would make them compete better on the political arena. Unfortunately, I cannot exhaust all the resources that policy actors have at their disposal but money is one of them, then there is knowledge and mobilization."

It is evident from this report that financial resources affect the number of actionable policies that can be adopted by the government and even the processes thereof. For example, in the energy sector, with US\$350.7 million on the line saw the government committing to efforts to revitalize the power infrastructure for reliable and sustainable power. Thus, the government adopted reform agendas aimed at building capacity in sector pivotal institutions including ESCOM, MERA and Ministry of Energy. This also led to the restructuring of the Malawi energy market—the amendment of the Electricity Act and unbundling of ESCOM to create two utilities ESCOM and EGENCO and preparation of new regulatory rules and also guidelines to accommodate the proposed changes.

Furthermore, because policy is the result of a bargaining process among actors who frequently have diverse and even opposing preferences and interests, policy actors need an advantage to win this competition. For example, Masefield et al. (2021) explain that in the Malawian health sector not all policy actors have equitable and inclusive consultations as other policy actors have limited resources. This study found out that this trend is not only prevalent in the health sector but in other policy domains as well, including the energy sector. On this note, donors that have a large proportion of funding are perceived to have a lot of leverage in policy decision-making and specifically driving the development of policies (see also Chinsinga, 2007b). In the same vein, the 2005/06 national budget was marked with resistance from the opposition. The epitome of this saga was the fertilizer subsidy which saw the opposition getting a lot of leverage over government because they were majority in parliament, hence they had control of the proceedings including the budget. Due to this, they made their way trying to negotiate for a universal subsidy program. Although agreed, it was not so in implementation as coupons were distributed (Chinsinga, 2010). However argued, resources affect what and how policies are deliberated on and adopted. There are also instances where groups can fail to organize themselves over a common cause because they lack financial resources. If this is the case, then it means that they do not voice out their concerns and the status quo is maintained. This is usually the case with nascent groups who are usually outgunned financially and politically in the policy environment.

This study also found out that knowledge of the specific policy area is another resource that policy actors use to their advantage. A respondent said:

“There are instances where you involve specific stakeholders because they have knowledge on the issue. For example, in Malawi, we cannot be talking about renewable energy and leave REIAMA out. They have to be there, they have the knowledge pool of most of these issues in renewable energy.”

It is evident from this response that knowledge is one of the foundations of public and private actors’ intervention capacity. Indeed, this cognitive resource consists of information acquired in relation to technical, social, economic and political data concerning the collective problem to be solved. It comprises factors that are indispensable to the good management of a policy at all levels—political definition of

the public problem, political-administrative program, implementation and evaluation of effect. Due to the fact that policy process is seen as the site of politics, processes of contest, negotiation, marginalization, *et cetera*, knowledge reflects and sustain existing power structures and imbalances (Jones, 2009). It was observed by this study that at the agenda-setting stage knowledge is used to identify new problems or highlight the magnitude of a problem, and that uptake of knowledge is enhanced if it is crystalized around a policy narrative. However, policy narratives are not neutral descriptions as they capture how stories and rhetoric coalesce into stable meaning systems, institutional practices and power structures that can constrain or shape agency. To this end, some ideas are organized into politics and others are organized out. In addition, knowledge and ideas also exert effects by becoming institutionalized, embedded in law or within bureaucratic procedures, this creates constituencies that defend the ideas if needed. Again, this keeps certain actors and issues off the agenda.

In short, knowledge base on some issues over other actors in the policy environment is a powerful resource as it gives those who possess it an advantage over others. In fact, policy actors who possess knowledge on a public policy issue meet regularly with government officials (in closed spaces), trying to define and come up with solutions even prior to the policy draft documents through to the implementation phase of the policy in question.

Knowledge base as a resource for competition on the political turf at the agenda setting stage is very much closely related to the human resource. It is argued that the personnel that make public policies should be knowledgeable in the specific policy area, and thus be able to lead deliberations. However, this study found out that there is lack of leadership and technical guidance on the part of government to provide policy direction. As a result, there is lack of ownership for policy processes, giving the impression that it is being driven by development partners. Most of the leading personnel from government agencies are not conversant with the nuances of policy processes. On this note an official from one of the organizations said:

“You look at the people in some government agencies and you wonder why they are there, they don’t seem to understand a thing in as far as renewable energy is concerned. Yet we have left them to steer the policy and determine the direction of which this nation will take in as far as development of

renewable energy is concerned. That's scary you know, I think guys from ESCOM know better than some of these bureaucrats and sadly the ESCOM guys are not even part of the policymaking clique."

This echoes what Chinsinga (2007b) observed in the Malawian Social Protection Policy. The argument here is that the technocrats are not familiar with the nuances of policy issues and policy processes in general. In the end, it is the donors that assume the leading role in policy making.

The study also found out that political support is another resource that policy actors may use to their advantage to win the political turf at the agenda setting stage of renewable energy in Malawi. It was observed that there are instances when a policy has lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the general public, in such instances, policy actors need to mobilize for political support. The study recorded that policy actors may need to redefine the issue to get additional source of power for issue expansion. As redefinition involves the substitution of one issue for another, usually a more specific issue being redefined to a more general one, several diverse groups become involved. Efforts to expand the issues are important because they increase the likelihood of more influential and powerful actors entering the conflict on the side of policy change. The increased attention may also tilt the balance of debate in favor of pro-change groups.

At the same time, status quo-oriented groups seek to prevent the promotion of issues that they find detrimental to their interests. This means that groups and advocacy coalitions that have traditionally struggled to gain a hearing or see their preferences translated into policy must overcome the aggressive blocking action of their political opponents. In this case, pro-change groups need to mobilize in a number of ways, including membership drives and appeals for donations based on the need to react to an issue and the failed policies that allowed it to happen. At the extreme, groups join boycotts and participate in other forms of mass protests. However, mass protests are very unlikely in the energy sector in Malawi.

It can be concluded that competition for political turf explains the constellation of political actors in the policy processes with their different interests, values and ideas. Thus, public policies are a product of struggle. In this vein, it can be argued that those

actors that do not possess power either in terms of money, knowledge, or political mobilization are likely to lose out. However, they may find their way back in by forming coalitions with others that have the said resources at their disposal. In this way public policy reflects the group model of policy making where individuals or groups having common interests and demands join hands together and form formal or informal groups, in order to influence the policies of the government to suit their needs. On this basis, the equilibrium reached from the struggle of various groups in the policy processes bring about public policies. Policy formulators succumb to the pressure of the dominant groups through bargaining, negotiating, and compromising. Thus, in the process of group struggle, the demands and the desires of the pressure groups enter the government arena and policy is formulated.

4.5.1 Policy Actors' Resources and Competition Among Agendas in Policy Domains

Renewable energy is imperative to ensure security of energy supplies, reduce health effects of conventional energy use, and mitigate climate change. The transition from fossil fuels to renewables also facilitates economic development and alleviate poverty (IRENA, 2019). This shows that energy is closely related to other sectors in the economy. In politics, a policy domain is a component of the political system that is organized around substantive issues. Burstein (1991), explains that other terms used with the same meaning include; policy areas, subsystems, programs, issue domains or policy domains. Policy domains such as energy, health education and agriculture, for example, have a certain logic and coherence, and most specific issues fit relatively unambiguously into these or other domains. In other words, policy domains take each other into account as they formulate policy issues and work for their adoption. However, not all issues will be considered by the government for action, as the number of issues in any polity far exceeds the capabilities of decision-making institutions to process them (Cobb et al., 1976). This therefore means that even within and across policy domains, policy actors have to compete for the political turf to place their issues on the formal agenda. To this end, policy actors' resources may promote competition among agendas both within and across policy domains.

A respondent indeed highlighted:

“I would say that there is a profound link between access to sustainable energy and education. For example, rural and urban areas have different results in national examinations not only because of good teachers and learning materials at the disposal of those in the urban areas. I believe electrification gives a good explanation as well. In my view, lighting allows for better learning environment, extended operating school hours used for studying and better teacher preparations. It could be ideal, if this was brought forward in education policies as a way of laying down fundamentals of a more coordinated approach among public agencies for collaborating in the provision of energy and education infrastructure and services.”

Accordingly, this shows that as a country the education sector just as the energy sector has a role to play to make sure that there is sustainable universal access to electricity. Against this background, it was found out by the study that it was doubtful if issues of energy access are discussed at policy level in the educational sector, as the sector seems to be struggling with its own ills that if otherwise corrected would improve the quality of education in the country. For example, much of the donor finances and resources have been shifted even from other sectors to address the problems of insufficient teachers and teaching materials, poor sanitation, insufficient classrooms, and the inequalities in girls’ attendance for schools, among other problems. Implicitly, this means that there is a scramble of resources within this policy domain and across for the problems to be addressed. In this case, it is therefore evident that money or the financial resource would tilt a debate toward policies that incentivize and prioritize energy access in the education sector. It was also found out by this study, that separately, the inclusion of energy education in curricula can build a skill base from early on, creating a young generation that can act as change agents, while simultaneously allowing greater youth innovation to advance sustainable energy solutions.

It was also found out by the study that renewable energy development can be crucial to the agricultural sector of the country. The rationale here is that stand-alone renewable energy systems in rural communities where the existing grid electricity is inaccessible might provide a steady source of energy for smallholder farmers. This can improve agricultural production through pumping water for irrigation, fish

farming, livestock rearing, primary processing or small-scale industries. However argued, Chinsinga (2012) articulates that access to maize forms a critical component of the social contract between the Malawi state and its people. This means that the fertilizer subsidy programs under different appearances and names is the main driving policy in the sector. Arguably, it is seen by others as a politically driven program meant to serve the interests of the elite to retain and consolidate their political power, influence and authority. To this end, subsidy program is perhaps the most compelling cognitive resource at the disposal of policy makers in the agricultural sector. This means that the fertilizer subsidy program better explains complex information that has to be rendered digestible for public consumption and also in a manner that wins desired support. No wonder, over the years, the subsidy program has been on top of government's shop list—it is allocated huge sums of money.

Since only a limited number of issues are considered for government action at any particular time (see Dye, 2014; Kingdon, 2014; Howlett et al., 2009), it therefore means that policy actors both in the energy sector and in the agriculture sector (those that lean toward the development of renewables to improve agriculture production) have to wield other important resources other than knowledge for their ideas to be considered for discussion. It was found out by this study that other than financial resources and political mobilization, policy actors in these sectors may organize conferences on renewable energy specific to smallholder agriculture. This can be a tool for informing decision-makers on rural energy and energy access planning.

Energy plays a vital role as an enabler of positive health outcomes, powering health facilities and the delivery of medical services that they provide. It was observed by this study that achieving universal access to affordable and reliable energy will improve the health and well-being of some of the most vulnerable people in the country.

A respondent reported:

“If you have ever visited remote areas you will agree with me. There are energy gaps that might be filled with sound policies. I don't think as a country we are doing enough in the energy and the health systems. A lot of health facilities in the country lack even the most basic energy services, including

lighting for child delivery and emergency night-time health care, refrigeration of vaccines or electricity for simple medical and diagnostic equipment.”

It is quite clear from the respondent that resolving the energy gap in the health facilities will require decision-makers from both the energy and health sectors to work closely together to ensure that health facility energy needs are adequately prioritized in national energy strategies, as well as in health sector development plans. However, government decision-making is driven by competing views and power struggles between policy actors. Drawing from the bureaucratic politics perspective, this means that different organizations do not merely have different views and preferences on substantial policy problems, but they are also motivated by the self-interests of institutional maintenance (Bach, 2021). This may help to explain why there is lack of policy coherence not only between the energy and health sectors but with other policy domains as well. Frederickson et al. (2012), explaining bureaucratic politics highlight that this is a consequence of functional specialization within governmental organizations, and it leads into a division of labor. In this case, a division of labor between and within organizations result in different local rationalities where officials pay attention to distinct aspects of a policy problem or the organizational goal. Indeed, on this note, the same problem may be defined differently by the actors in the different policy domains. Evidently, this means that organizational structure shapes the attention of public officials and their policy choices.

It was found out by this study, that the different domains involved, each has a preferred world, a way to frame problems and a set of values that support the vision and the solution. In this sense policymakers tend to limit the scope of the policy processes to only safe issues as values can be highly contested in an effort to merit political attention. This can also be looked at through the lenses of a turf. The notion of a ‘turf’ underlines that specialization does not simply lead to a distinct perspective on a problem, but that organizations (or sectors/policy domains) pursue institutional self-interests to project or enlarge their turf. This means that each policy sector or organizational unit becomes a guardian of its own mission, standards, and skills. Drawing from the institutionalist perspective of public policy, this therefore means that it is very likely that policy sectors will continue with the existing patterns of doing business than trying to negotiate new ones (Kent et al., 2012). In addition, the

standard operating procedures of the sectors tend to promote continuation of existing programs—inhibiting innovation and perpetuating existing arrangements (see Howlett et al., 2009). It was discovered by this study that issue redefinition would be an appropriate strategy to shift values and the standard operating procedures toward a joint solution in both the energy and health sectors.

Despite a shortage in supply, poor people in many areas use biomass as their energy carrier. Waris & Antahal (2014) found out that fuel wood scarcity increase time burdens for women and girls to the extent that girls may drop out from school to help their mothers in households and other chores, thus limiting their opportunities to obtain an education and undertake income generating activities (see also, Taalo et al., 2015).

As indicated above, there is a clear and important intersection between energy access and gender equality. Women and children are often disproportionately affected by lack of energy access, in that large amounts of time and labor must go toward meeting daily needs. To this end, a respondent said:

“In my view, it is reasonable to conclude that the current structures and policies in both the energy and gender sectors are not functioning in such a way to address energy gaps and the inequalities that are there. Gender issues and inequalities must be addressed more comprehensively and consistently by the energy policy and/or energy strategies.”

It is clear from the respondent that in order to address issues of energy poverty, issues of gender have to be considered as men and women are affected differently. In addition, there is also a considerable difference on how access to energy affects women in rural and urban settings. It was found out by this study that one way of getting government attention on this, is to stress on the importance of gender integration in energy policy and regulation. In this case, gender mainstreaming in energy access may help to address existing gender barriers in expanding energy access. Since gender mainstreaming involves gender audits as tools, this will help unearth gender differences in household decision-making, preferences and priorities. In this way, opportunities and gaps will be evident at the level of energy policies, programs and projects (see IRENA, 2019). Against this background, there are

national budget constraints and low commitment from the government toward gender mainstreaming in government agencies. This therefore means that it is very likely for policymakers to maintain the status quo despite overwhelming evidence on the negative effects of biomass use and its scarcity.

The policy making environment is disintegrated and instead of different government agencies committing themselves to pursue policy coherence they tend to prioritize individual ministry goals against minimal resources. This means that policy actors have to face trade-offs whenever a proposed policy requires public funds, as this typically implies an increase in the tax burden or reduction in spending on other programs. In democracies, there will rarely be a unanimous view of how such trade-offs should be decided. Moreover, different interests will try to influence decision-makers to tip the scales in their favor. This may result in self-interested behavior of policy actors and state officials leading to policies that are captured by narrow interests. Indeed, achieving policy coherence is costly for policymakers coordinating against a large number of policy areas and potentially across several levels of government, it creates transaction costs. This in turn may require a significant amount of time, attention and energy, or '*political capital*' of various policymaking communities. The transaction costs of achieving policy coherence may require extensive research and consultation to identify potential interactions. However, policy actors do not have all the time in the world as windows of opportunity do not remain open for long. Thus, policy actors end up 'satisficing' their decisions or they take incremental steps from initial situations by comparing only a small number of possible alternatives which are not very different from the status quo.

4.5.2 *Development Partners and Renewable Energy in Malawi*

The concept of partnerships is deeply embedded in development theory, rhetoric and practice. Partnerships are often constructed as the key relationship between donor agencies and local recipient organizations and are one manifestation of a populist and participatory approach to development (Impey & Overton, 2013). It is argued by Gutierrez (2008) that 'partnership' evokes much sensitivity with its implicit connotations of sharing, equality, respect, reciprocity and ownership. Against this backdrop, partnerships are criticized by some observers as being merely asymmetrical mechanisms through which paternalistic donors continue to exert control over

development activities. Critics of partnerships in practice also argue that, despite the objectives of respect and mutual involvement, they are frequently characterized by skewed structures of power which place the developed partner country in a position of disproportionate control (Impey & Overton, 2013; Gutierrez, 2008). Furthermore, far from promoting local dignity and empowerment, such partnerships may serve to create new ties of dependency (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). It is clear from this argument that partnerships exist on an uneven playing field, with the partner controlling finances often determining the terms of the partnership. To this end, an official from one of the organizations explained:

“If coordinated properly, development assistance can be beneficial for the energy sector policy planning because it facilitates the use of external technical expertise. However, sometimes donor priorities are inconsistent with that of the Ministry, and it becomes difficult to consolidate the two. In such situations donor assistance may not be well coordinated and it can be detrimental to the establishment of a coherent set of energy investments and policies.”

This narration shows that partnerships can be considered something of a Trojan Horse, disguising the reality of the complex relationships in imbalances of power and inequality, often expressed through the control of one partner over the other. It was found out by this study that because donors control the purse, more generally, they resort to conditionality as a substitute for policy processes. This means that there is lack of constructive dialogue on the policies that are adopted as aid conditionalities are agreed under pressure. For example, due to the limited capacity, Malawi's energy issues are mostly carried out by donor-selected consultants, and there is usually little or no coordination between donors and government agencies. This in most cases has led to the bulk of assistance to be directed toward the existing electricity networks, rather than off-grid communities. In essence, this continues the historical bias toward centralized power supply. This therefore means that the political-economic contests in sectors of generation, distribution, finance, technology and knowledge are overlooked. Furthermore, imposed policies may fail because the government is simply not committed to them and they may miss well-grounded reality of the

recipient country. Thus, a combination of these factors may result in policies that tend to maintain the status quo, in either their formulation or implementation.

Apart from aid conditionalities, this study also found out that at times donors may substitute the nation state and takeover its job in the policy function. This is well explained by Chinsinga (2007b) who observed that the government fails to provide leadership and technical guidance and direction to the policy processes. The argument here is that deficiencies in expertise among government officials creates favorable atmosphere for donors involved to dominate policymaking in various ways.

4.6 Institutions and Renewable Energy

Around the globe the electricity sector is strikingly similar, regardless of nation, it is structured around centralized large-scale power production. However, these centralized systems are experiencing operational problems related to climate change, energy security, aging grid infrastructures and regional challenges (Libertson, 2021). The pressing conditions under which the electricity sector is forced to operate have resulted in an increased interest in alternatives such as decentralized systems and renewable energy generation. It is argued by Dincer and Rosen (2021) that existing utilities often play a key role in determining the adoption of renewable energy technologies. In this sense, to seize opportunities, the barriers and constraints to the diffusion of renewables should be removed. In other words, the effective adoption of new technologies goes hand in hand with the adoption of complementary institutions that render such technology effective and affordable.

Genus (2015) highlights that institutions are generally understood as the rules of the game that people devise, which reduce uncertainty by providing structure to everyday life. Hale and Taylor (1996) define an institutional arrangement as the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy. Heyi (2021) explains that institutions influence actions of policy actors as they shape the interpretations of problems and possible solutions, they also constrain the choice of solutions and the way and the extent to which policies can be implemented. It is further explained by Heyi (2021) that the standardized guides of behaviour, that is, institutional rules and structures can affect decision-making and the substance of public policy. However, rules and

structural arrangements are not neutral in their effects, rather they tend to favour some interests and policy results over others. It is also explained by Heyi (2021) that different types of institutions such as private sector, individual business, central state, local governments, political parties, interest groups and foreign political governments can manipulate public policy of a given country.

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) explain that the set of policy institutions can be considered a policy subsystem, as a 'space' where relevant actors discuss policy issues and persuade and bargain in pursuit of their interests (see also Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Policy subsystems includes actors who are intimately involved in the issue at stake, as well as those who are marginally involved. Thus, policy subsystems incorporate both policy networks and discourse communities. However, it has to be noted that subsystems may be constituted by an almost infinite variety of actors and institutions, and their composition may vary by country, by policy sectors or domains and over time (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

By looking at our energy systems today, it is undeniable that they are 'locked-in' in a path-dependent process. These lock-ins combined with the large economies of scale can impede on the development of renewable energy (Mourik et al., 2020). In this light, when considering a transition to renewable energies it is important not to overlook the effects of institutions. Oteman et al. (2014) also highlight that renewable energy initiatives have the tendency to overstate the importance of agency characteristics such as leadership while neglecting the importance of contextual and structural factors. Yet the rules and procedures for policy (project) planning and implementation, available subsidies, the attitude of the market and government partners may also be critical factors for renewable energy development. In this light, there are deliberate 'rules of the game' that countries are adopting to ensure an increase in renewable energy deployment. These policies and regulations include but are not limited to: legal framework for independent power producers, power purchase agreements, transmission access, electricity feed-in laws, subsidies and rebates, tax relief, as well as unbundling of generation, transmission and distribution.

4.6.1 Institutions that Reinforce Policy Networks and Narratives for Renewable Energy Development in Malawi

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include universal access to electricity by 2030 will not be achieved solely through the traditional approach of extending the grid. Accordingly, the deployment of decentralized solutions for electricity is now at the forefront of the development agenda (IRENA, 2018). In this context, many countries, Malawi inclusive are prioritizing renewable decentralized technologies to meet energy access and broader development goals. However argued, public policy does not happen in a vacuum. There are different actors, values, ideas, interests and institutions that affect public policy in different ways (Howlett et al., 2009). In terms of renewable energy in Malawi there are a number of institutions that affect its development. In this respect, a respondent said:

“I think now we are moving in the right direction, because in the beginning it was just the Electricity Act and the Rural Electrification Act but now we have the IPPs Framework... ummh well, this is huge. Again, we have to give credit to the government through MERA for the Power Purchase Agreements.”

Another respondent echoed this view, and he said:

“The power purchase agreement and the IPPs framework are the right tools for renewable energy development in Malawi.”

It is clear from the responses that there are formal institutions that guide the development of renewable energy in Malawi. For example, the study found out that the Electricity Act sets out the institutional environment of the energy sector in Malawi. In other words, the Electricity Act underlines the official and authoritative feature of government arrangement in terms of policy subsystems in the energy sector. However, just like in many developing countries, Malawi is committed to decreasing the energy security and energy poverty issues by venturing into rural electrification. The rationale for rural electrification is that grid extension is too costly and unrealistic as such there is a need for planning to emerge that designate certain geographic areas as targets for off-grid renewable energy development. However, the study found out that in Malawi, the focus has not been on the off-grid development because these are seen as unattractive to private companies and utilities. The current

rural electrification program in Malawi is via grid extension and has been nurtured by development partners. However, it has to be noted that community-based ventures provide a better option for many people that are not connected to the grid. It is argued by Madriz-Vargas et al. (2017) that electricity in isolated rural communities can result in significant socio-economic outcomes. For instance, improving education, improving health services, improving drinking-water provision, enabling gender and youth empowerment and allowing productive uses resulting in poverty alleviation.

Clearly, rural electrification enforces the energy for development narrative as energy is interlinked with other aspects of the development discourse. In addition, rural electrification also enforces the energy security narrative if the path taken is via off-grid or mini-grids. This is so because it reduces the strain on the existing grid. Since rural electrification may mean diversification, it increases flexibility of the energy system and reduces vulnerability to supply constraints or changes in the environment hence it can be a key measure of energy security in the long-run. Furthermore, rural electrification means that there is a cut in energy losses that are incurred when transmitting electricity for long distances. This energy can be diverted somewhere, thus, overcoming issues of susceptibility. The fact that the government cannot achieve the objectives of rural electrification on their own means that they involve other actors. These actors exchange ideas and/or resources to achieve the intended. Arguably, resource exchange leads to the recognition by government that it is useful to consult these groups on a regular basis in this policy area. This is in line with Compston (2009) who defined a policy network as a set of policy actors who engage in resource exchange over public policy (policy decisions) as a consequence of their resource interdependencies. In short, rural electrification specifically enforces the energy security narrative and that of energy for development, it also enforces policy networks as different actors work hand-in-hand with the government or parts of the government.

Furthermore, renewable energy development can be accelerated by Power Purchase Agreements. It was explained by one of the respondents that these are contract agreements between energy buyers and sellers and they provide security to the producer that the project will bring return on their capital investment upon completion, by reducing the cash-flow uncertainty. Beck and Martinot (2004) argue

that Power purchase agreements provide renewable energy generators with a steady source of income in highly volatile power markets, and for buyers, they offer not only a credible way to green their own operations, but also more certainty in their business planning. Thus, PPA are often central to investment decisions, since they mitigate market risks, mainly those related to fluctuations of energy prices. Against this background, it was established by this study that the PPA in Malawi is negotiable, that is, the IPPs and the government negotiate on the price at which the IPP is willing to sell. This shows that renewable energy development is a political process because negotiations involves definition and re-definition of ideas, interest and values, and there is also the power aspect.

In most countries Malawi inclusive, in an effort to increase development in the renewable energy sector, there has been emphasis on the importance of private sector participation. In this context the government has introduced a set of reforms to the Malawian power sector with the goal of increasing availability of reliable electricity supply. Accordingly, the IPP framework provide interested parties with a clear understanding of how to invest in Malawi's power sector. The IPP framework is the commitment of the government and other stakeholders to establish a clear and robust processes for securing investment in the power sector that balances the interests of consumers for cost-effective, reliable power supply with the commercial interests of private investors.

It is argued that the IPP framework forms a part of the larger reform agenda launched by the government which has restructured the market in Malawi to level the playing field for IPPs by unbundling the generation business from ESCOM, and establishing a new business unit, the Single Buyer, with responsibility for leading the planning and execution of generation supply procurement. The logic here is that the trend will move away from traditional monopolies toward open competition, where power contracts are signed between buyers and sellers in wholesale 'power markets' (Beck & Martinot, 2004). In this case, the potential effects of competitive wholesale markets and IPPs on renewable energy are significant. Wholesale power markets allow IPPs to bypass the biases against renewables that traditional utility monopolies have had.

Further to this, in political systems, the extent to which politicians can respond to the preferences of the people is extremely important (Uzar, 2020). It was noted by this

study that in cases where there is elite capture, power asymmetry between the elites and the poor causes economic profits for the elite and environmental harm for the poor. In fact, in cases where corruption is normalized, political elites who have power can ensure the approval of projects that have negative impacts on the environment. This study unearthed that in such instances even energy regulation is in favour of traditional monopolies which in turn impinges on renewable energy investments. Furthermore, corruption and rent-seeking activities reduce productive investments. This is so because investors would not want to commit their resources in a country where corruption is high.

4.6.2 Appropriate Institutions for Initiating Renewable Energy

Development in Malawi

Lack of reliable energy supply is one of the common problems facing many African countries including Malawi. Over the years, availability of electricity has become one of the biggest challenges the country is facing. The study found out that while rural electrification may be a well-established need in developing countries, simply maintaining the existing grid presents challenges to the government and the private sector as national grids are plagued with power blackouts and load-shedding. Therefore, as an alternative or complement to grid expansion, off-grid renewables are expected to play a major role in energy success in the future. On this note, other respondents pointed out there should be appropriate institutions put in place by the government to ensure that the sector develops to its full potential.

A number of respondents pointed out that the PPA is a good initiative but said that government should also pledge ambitious commitments in support of the transition to renewable energy. Thus, the government should incentivize investment by creating attractive fiscal frameworks, including tax incentives and measures in order to steer both business and consumer behaviors. It was found out by this study that tax incentives are regarded as a flexible economic tool as the target is on a specific market need. In some countries they impose an additional tax burden on fossil fuels to discourage their consumption. It is also intended to create profitability advantage for renewable energy. The argument here is that the government should adopt tax incentives (in parallel with regulatory and pricing policies) to increase access to lower

financing costs, reduce the burden of high upfront costs or the production costs of large-scale renewable energy projects.

Furthermore, one respondent said that the government may also introduce feed-in tariffs as is the case in some countries. According to Dijkgraaf et al. (2018), a feed-in tariff is a policy tool designed to promote investment in renewable energy sources. This involves promising small-scale producers of renewable energy an above-market price for what they deliver to the grid. Feed-in tariffs are seen as necessary to promote renewable energy sources in the early stages of their development, when production is often not economically feasible. Feed-in tariffs usually involve long-term agreements and prices tied to the cost of production of the energy in question. It is argued by Beck and Martinot (2004) that long-term contracts and guaranteed prices shelter producers from some of the risks inherent in the renewable energy production, encouraging investment and development that otherwise might not take place.

Furthermore, it was also noted by this study that the government and utility companies can make voluntary programs to increase the development of renewable energy. In this case, key policies and approaches enabling the transformation to renewable energy can include information awareness programs on the benefits of renewable generation, community-based programs, corporate procurement and supply chain greening, *et cetera*. Indeed, while economic and technical factors may explain the energy potential gaps, lack of awareness and social acceptance may discourage the development of certain technologies on grounds of norms, values and beliefs that may be unsupportive of the use of modern energy. For example, Wabukala et al. (2022) explain that some people believe that meals cooked using wood fuels are ‘tastier’ than food prepared using electrical energy. Thus, aversive social beliefs and norms can discourage the uptake and use of electricity and could make electricity generation unprofitable. In this context, it is argued by IRENA (2018) that information awareness programs often lay groundwork for community programs and are aimed at educating electricity end-users on the benefits of renewable energy, such as local economic development, greenhouse gas emission reduction, air quality improvements, climate resilience and so on.

4.6.3 Institutions and the Flow of Benefits and Costs in Malawi's

Renewable Energy Sector

Institutions are the formal structures and informal rules and norms that govern people's behaviour and expectations in interactions with others. Institutions can either help or hinder development depending on how they structure decision-making (Luiz, 2009). On this note, a respondent articulated that:

"I am happy with the direction that we are taking as a country, I believe we are on the right trail. What is in place may encourage other investors to come and invest in this country. In the long-term energy disruptions might be history if we remain committed to the course."

The narration shows that the respondent was optimistic about what the future might bring. In this sense the institutions that are in place are expected to bring about growth in the energy sector. This might be extrapolated to say that in this case it is not only the energy producers that will benefit from this as profits will be realized, even the consumers will benefit as power disruption will be minimized or done away with. In this case people (particularly those from the rural areas), will be able to divert their time to other development related tasks rather than collecting fuel wood. Reliable electricity will also improve peoples' health and education.

However, sometimes institutions can be detrimental to growth, for example, in situations where corruption and rent-seeking activities are normalized the elites tend to gain political and economic rents at the expense of the poor. It is also argued that investors are scared to invest in such an environment. In other words, corruption tend to perpetuate poverty and it affects a lot of people than it can be imagined (Uzar, 2020). For example, there are cases where the government has failed to procure drugs in rural hospitals because the funds are not available. Corruption may also lead to commissioning of substandard projects—this entails loss of money by the government.

Table 3: An overview of the renewable energy policy actors in Malawi, narratives, values, resources, institutions and their implications on renewable energy

Institutions	Implications on Renewable Energy
The National Energy Policy; The Electricity Act; Rural electrification; the Agenda 2063; IPP framework; International ratifications e.g. The Kyoto Protocol and commitment toward SDGs	Anticipating likely points of conflict in transition processes; may lead to developing renewable energy targets
The National Energy Policy	financing in annual budget making
The National Energy Policy; the Agenda 2063	This may provide a basis for weaning off fossil fuels
The National Energy Policy; the Agenda 2063	Limitations in credible and reliable energy data for planning and forecasting may make investors uneasy to commit; may discourage investment if bureaucrats are involved in corruption and some rent-seeking activities; may lead to
International ratifications e.g. the Kyoto Protocol; The National Energy Policy; commitment toward SDGs	Can manipulate renewable energy policy of a recipient country; May induce a need to tailor international funding options to local context
The National Energy Policy; the Agenda 2063	May lead to more robust decision-making as CSOs expand the knowledge pool of most policy issues
The National Energy Policy; The Electricity Act; Rural Electrification Act; The Agenda 2063	Realizing that off-grid and mini-grid options can play meaningful roles in energy security; offers the possibility of modernizing infrastructure to multiple connections to renewables—improving resilience in the face of disasters
The Energy Regulatory Act; The National Energy Policy; The Agenda 2063; IPP framework; PPAs	This may provide a basis for an ongoing capacity building in the design and negotiation of bankable PPAs
The National Energy Policy; The Agenda 2063; IPP framework; PPAs	Establishing guaranteed take-off, stimulating confidence in predictable long-term revenues and mitigating possible curtailment events within an appropriate regulatory framework; may lead to an effective commitment of private capital to the deployment of renewable energy projects; IPPs may bypass the biases that traditional monopolies have had
The National Energy Policy	Influence individual acceptance or rejection of certain transition pathways; likely to start a debate on institutional and policy changes as well as consumer demands and political will

Interests	Strategies	Resources
Power	Controlling participation; inspiring bias toward some viewpoints through the control of information flow	Human resource
Power; domestic influence	Networking; venue shopping	Human resource
Power; status; election/re-election	Venue shopping; connecting problems with societal values	Money; Knowledge
Increased government budgets; status	Networking; venue shopping	Human resource
Foreign control; power	Controlling participation; inspiring bias toward some viewpoints through the control of information flow; connecting problems with societal values; conducting research	Money; political support
Status; money; power	Networking; venue shopping; connecting problems with societal values; conducting research; holding conferences	Knowledge; political support
Super-normal profits	Controlling participation	Knowledge
Domestic control	Controlling participation	Human resource; knowledge
Domestic control, money	Venue shopping; connecting problems with societal values	Knowledge
Status, power	Venue shopping; connecting problems with societal values; conducting research; holding conferences	Knowledge; political support

Actors	Narratives	Values
Department of Energy Affairs/Ministry of Energy	Energy for all; energy for development; energy security	○ Avoiding waste— concerns are in the context of wasting something that is finite most obviously fossil fuels and/or forest reserves; concerns for associated negative impacts of energy systems on the environment and human health ○ Environment and nature—Concerns about climate change and pollution/environmental degradation ○ Autonomy and power—Against imposed changes and technologies or external control ○ Security and Stability— concerns over access to energy services for all members of the society which is reliable, safe and clean ○ Social justice and fairness— Fair distribution of risks and benefits for different groups of people ○ Environment and nature— concerns about climate change and pollution/environmental degradation ○ Autonomy and power— negative views about national dependency on energy imports
Other Ministries e.g. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education	Energy for all; energy for development; energy justice	○ Security and Stability— concerns over access to energy services for all members of the society which is reliable, safe and clean ○ Social justice and fairness— Fair distribution of risks and benefits for different groups of people ○ Environment and nature— concerns about climate change and pollution/environmental degradation ○ Autonomy and power— negative views about national dependency on energy imports
Political Leaders	Energy for all; energy for development	○ Avoiding waste— concerns for associated negative impacts of energy systems on the environment and human health ○ Security and Stability— concerns on market efficiency over energy affordability, security of supply and sustainability
Government Bureaucrats	Energy for all; energy for development; energy justice	○ Avoiding waste— concerns for associated negative impacts of energy systems on the environment and human health ○ Security and Stability— concerns on market efficiency over energy affordability, security of supply and sustainability
Development Partners	Energy for all; energy democracy; energy justice; energy for development; energy security	○ Environment and nature—concerns about climate change and pollution/environmental degradation ○ Security and Stability— ensuring and supporting access to energy services for all members of the society which is reliable, safe and clean ○ Social justice and fairness—considerations for future generations (bringing to mind issues of intra and inter-generational justice; ensuring that no one is left behind as particular technologies, skill set and so forth become obsolete)
Civil Society Organizations	Energy for all; energy for development; energy justice	○ Environment and nature— concerns about climate change and pollution/environmental degradation ○ social justice and fairness—considerations for future generations (bringing to mind issues of intra and inter-generational justice; ensuring that no one is left behind as particular technologies, skill set and so forth become obsolete; advocating for fair distribution of energy system' s costs
State-Owned Electricity Companies	Energy for all; energy for development	○ Environment and nature— avoiding climate change and pollution/environmental degradation ○ Process and Change— technological development, particularly around efficiency as an important goal; gradual transformations
Energy Regulating Company	Energy for all; energy for development	○ Autonomy and power— against monopolies manipulating the energy market to their advantage
Independent Power Producers	Energy for all; energy democracy; energy justice; energy for development;	○ Security and Stability— concerns on providing access to energy services for all members of the society which is reliable, safe and clean; concerns on market efficiency over energy affordability, security of supply and sustainability
Energy Consumers and General Public	Energy for all; energy for development; energy justice; energy security	○ Security and stability— require energy access for all members of the society which is reliable, safe and clean ○ Autonomy and Power— changes undertaken should not compromise personal control and freedom ○ Social justice and fairness— against monopolies limiting consumer choice

4.7 Conclusion

The chapter has presented the findings of the data that was collected in 8 organizations (the Department of Energy Affairs, MERA, PML, REIAMA, ESCOM, EGENCO, JCM Power, and Cedar Energy Limited). The findings and the discussion thereof were based on the four objectives of the study. The presentation focused on policy narratives and the way they affect the content and policy alternatives available to policymakers in the renewable energy sector in Malawi. Secondly, it analyzed how the agenda building process and the strategies that policy actors use in order to get their narratives on the formal agenda. Thirdly, this section assessed how policy actors' resources shape competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage of Malawi's renewable energy. Lastly, it examined the extent to which institutions reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy development in Malawi.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter concludes the study that was conducted at eight (8) organizations comprising officials from both public and private organizations promoting the development of renewable energy in Malawi. These organizations included: The Department of Energy Affairs, MERA, PML, REIAMA, ESCOM, EGENCO, JCM Power, and Cedar Energy Limited. The first section provides the conclusion. The second and third sections provide policy recommendations and areas for further studies.

This study aimed at understanding the political economy of the renewable energy policy processes in Malawi. The study was motivated by persistent electricity disruptions in the country amid vast renewable energy sources. Furthermore, it was noted that the literature on energy systems as key sites of political-economic contests was rudimentary and wanting. As a result, the study focused on the politics of policy processes with the aim of understanding actors promoting renewable energy in Malawi. The study showed that the literature at the researcher's disposal focused on the structural and technical aspects of renewable energy development in Malawi, thus, neglecting the politics in policy making (see Frame et al., 2013; Gamula et al., 2013; Zalengera et al., 2014; Taalo et al., 2015; Kachaje et al., 2017).

The main argument which has been presented in this study is that policymaking does not happen in distinct stages as suggested by the policymaking cycle except perhaps in a minimal sense that a policy has to be proposed, legislated and implemented. The reality of the policymaking process is that stages are not a linear sequence from policy formulation through to policy implementation. Even policies which have the semblance of proceedings in stages actually consist of a series of reversals and repetitions. Thus, stages are fused together, get driven by contingencies not logic, and produce diffuse effects that overlap with those from other policy initiatives. Notwithstanding, this means that the agenda setting stage is fraught with complexity, contingency, uncertainty, inadequate data, accident, misunderstandings and political

conflict. Certainly, the agenda setting stage features a clash of frames and a struggle among policy actors over the ‘naming’ of problems, the ‘blaming’ of conditions and actors for their existence, and the ‘claiming’ of specific vantage points or perspectives for their resolution. The resolution of this conflict and the elevation of a private or social grievance to the status of a public problem, therefore are related more to the abilities and resources of competing actors than to the elegance of purity of their ideas, but these ideas are critical in determining its content.

In an attempt to understand how politics of policy processes affect the development of renewable energy in Malawi’s energy sector, the study analyzed the narratives that suit actors’ political interests at the agenda setting stage. Secondly, the study identified strategies that policy actors employ in order to get their narratives on the formal agenda of renewable energy policy in Malawi. The study also assessed how policy actors’ resources shape competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage of Malawi’s renewable energy policy. Finally, the study examined the extent to which institutions (rules of the game) reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy narratives in Malawi.

The study used qualitative method to collect data. The study had a sample size of 20 respondents: three (3) key informants were from the Department of Energy Affairs, three (3) from EGENCO, three (3) from ESCOM and three (3) from MERA. Two (2) key informants came from each of the following: PML, JCM, Cedar Energy Limited, and Energy Industries Association of Malawi. However, there were also other referrals made by the initial respondents. The referrals were 4 in total, this therefore means that the sample size increased from 20 to 24. An interview guide was developed and key informant interviews were used as a data collection tool. Content analysis was used to analyse the data that was collected.

To achieve its aim, the study adopted rational choice institutionalism and path dependence as theoretical approaches for its analysis. The rational choice institutionalism was relevant for this study because it provided a way of thinking about politics in a systematic way and it offered a method of tracing the dynamics of power relations in policy spaces, policy actors’ interests, ideas and narratives which shape policy decisions and outcomes as well as particular practices. In this way the rational choice was helpful in unearthing incentives and disincentives in Malawi’s

renewable energy sector, and also how actors generate policy outcomes. The path dependence framework was relevant to this study because it revealed why institutions are persistent to change and how this constrain organizations, actors and their activities in the renewable energy sector in Malawi. Furthermore, because path dependence has profound implications for politics and decision-making in general it helped the researcher to understand the strategies of policy actors to win political turf at the agenda setting stage and how these influence the reluctance or inability to invest in renewable energy development in Malawi.

On the first objective, this study agrees with Howlett et al. (2009) that policymaking is burdened with a level of complexity that can be daunting. This is to say that the policymaking process is by no means the rational standard activity that is held up to be in much of the standard literature. It is messy, with outcomes occurring as a result of complicated political, social and institutional processes. It was established by this study that energy policymaking in Malawi does not happen in isolation, many factors affect a particular policy idea that may have little to do with the merits or reality of the policy. At any given time, multiple policies in different sectors are always competing with one another for the attention of people and their lawmakers. Public opinion, economic conditions, technological change and interest groups are likely to play a role, so are specific events, institutional influences and ideologies. Certainly, when thinking about the policy process as something constituted by actors, institutions, networks/subsystems, ideas/beliefs, contextual factors and events, one can understand actors' capabilities to influence change or stability as products of the interactions of such elements.

On policy narratives, the study agrees with Fadlallah et al. (2019) who explained that policy decisions are value-driven and political and not just evidence-based choices, and that policymakers operate on a different hierarchy of knowledge compared to researchers, that is, policymakers prefer information that is concise, appealing and relevant to current debates. To this end the study learned that policymakers in Malawi's renewable energy sector strategically craft narratives to resonate well with the public, relevant stakeholders and governmental decision-makers with the aim of claiming the policy space. It was also discovered that policy narratives define agency,

that is, who is involved and who is not as well as the number of renewable energy policy alternatives available in order to resolve the energy problem in the country.

On the second objective, this study agrees with Kingdon (2014) that agenda setting is not a rational process but a struggle over the definition of the problem as all interests are not equally represented, and some issues are more likely to reach the formal agenda than others. It was established that policy originates within a governmental agency (DoEA) or within a group which has easy access to decision-makers. This reflects the inside initiation model of public policymaking as explained by Cobb et al. (1976)—excluding the public from taking part in the policy processes. The study also established that there is lack of leadership in the policy processes and that often the development partners take the driving seat. They even control who is invited as a stakeholder. To this extent, other stakeholders feel that their participation is on a tokenistic basis. The study also found out that the strategies that policy actors use at the agenda building reflect their power and interest and the resources at their disposal. This entails that ideas or interests of those groups or individuals that do not possess enough power will not see the light of the day. In other words, non-decision will be the decision (see Howlett et al., 2009)

On the third objective this study established that policy is a result of a bargaining process among actors who frequently have diverse and opposing preferences and interests. To this end, they need to have an advantage to win this competition. This confirms what Cobb et al. (1976) said that in most communities the number of potential public issues far exceeds the capabilities of institutions to process them. Thus, policy issues or their proponents must consequently compete for a place on the decision-making agenda. To this end, the study learned that policy actors use financial resources, knowledge and political mobilization among other resources to win political turf at the agenda setting stage of Malawi's renewable energy. However, the study also noted that individuals and groups who do not possess enough resources may form a coalition with others to have better bargaining power. At this point, policymaking resembles the group model of public policymaking in which policy result from a system of forces and pressures acting and reacting to one another (Knill & Tosun, 2011). The study also established that the financial portion by international donors, if coordinated properly may positively affect the development of renewable

energy in Malawi. However, there are times when the donors take over the responsibility of policymaking from government (see Chinsinga, 2007b).

Lastly, the fourth objective has highlighted that energy systems in Malawi are locked-in a path dependent process which tend to favor traditional monopolies in energy production. In order to overcome this, the government introduced policy reforms in the energy sector to level the playing field for new entrants. The study also found out that while the government is committed to see that the institutions that are in place promote the development of renewable energy in the country, the government can also borrow a leaf and learn of other appropriate policies that have been adopted by other countries specifically for the development of renewable energy. It was also established that institutions in renewable energy can affect the flow of benefits and costs among policy actors, however this is dependent on the institutions that are in place.

5.2 Policy Recommendations

In most countries renewable energy is not perceived as a viable solution and alternative to conventional energy sources. Often times, conventional energies, due to their monopolistic nature, make it significantly more difficult for renewable energy to achieve higher market shares and attain the necessary economies of scale. On this note, the government should develop deliberate policies to level the playing field. In this context, the government should revise licensing procedures and import regulations to ensure that they are not biased against renewable energy development. Furthermore, the government should increase funding for renewable energy research and development. Here, the government has the opportunity to strengthen renewable energies by reversing the ratio of funds allocated to renewables versus those allocated for conventional energy research and development.

Secondly, achieving universal access to electricity requires better collaboration and coordination between stakeholders to align data, finance and government efforts. However, the government bureaucracy lacks sufficient capacity to design policies, establish standards and monitor the process. In this regard, this study recommends that there should be tailor-made training programs in policy and administration to overcome the inadequacies of the government bureaucracy. Furthermore, the study

recommends that the government should deliberately uplift the status of the civil service (through increased salaries and emoluments) to encourage the entrance of talented people and heighten the morale and sense of responsibility of those employed in the administration. On a related note, improved coordination between policy actors could increase the synergy of various electrification programs and save resources. This can be done by establishing a central planning unit independent of any particular ministry. In the case of Malawi where this is already in place, the central planning commission has to serve more than an advisory role and given more power. This in effect will help avoid '*planning-osis*,' and also provide a basis for energy policy coherence in different policy domains.

Thirdly, the study recommends that the government should create intentional spaces for participatory energy planning and deliberation. This is because participatory energy planning processes offer opportunities for communities to become educated and engaged on key issues, creating precedents and capacities for long-term, meaningful public participation in energy system decision-making. This will be important to achieving energy democracy because public participation is acknowledged as an important means for bringing forward perspectives other than those of the incumbents with vested interests in the status quo. In effect, this could potentially shift the political and institutional context within which decisions about future energy decisions are made.

The study also recommends that the government should have clear overall goals and targets for advancing the use of renewable energy to help create an environment that is conducive for long-term investments and one that provides planning certainty for both industrial stakeholders and consumers. Targets focus on aggregate energy production of an entire country and specify total primary energy from renewables and/or minimum renewable energy shares of electricity generation. The effort to reach the target that is set can be an incentive for the development of the renewable energy sector in Malawi.

Rural areas are at a particular disadvantage in terms of energy. They are often not connected to grids, and their remoteness makes it expensive to extend infrastructure to serve them. This leaves the rural people with no choice but to use fuel wood and other biomass resources, which in most cases is on unsustainable basis, thus, negatively

impacting the environment and the users. This study recommends that the government should not just focus on extending the grid to rural areas but also look at the introduction of renewable energies to these areas, and try to link that to rural development policies. In this way, people in the rural areas will be aware that sustainable development requires taking care of the environment, to the extent that they will become part of the solution.

The study also recommends that the government should look at governance issues, including respect for property rights and contract enforcements along with transparency and anticorruption policies and regulations as these are critical to attracting investors into the renewable energy sector. The logic here is that without the enforcement of property rights and anticorruption regulations, participation in some market activity is discouraged by the prospect that anyone engaging in such activity is unlikely to receive its full benefits. To this end, any expropriation of the proceeds of market activity by dishonest parties to a contract, bandits or corrupt government officials, is therefore likely to reduce incentives and opportunities for production, investment and innovation. Furthermore, the study also recommends that some administrative procedures should be streamlined as a reform to integrate long processes that characterise licence application, tariff negotiation, *et cetera.*, and take time bound decisions. It is believed that this may reduce some of the corruption among bureaucrats.

Finally, because energy access affects women and men differently, the study recommends that energy policies in general should be gender responsive. Lack of recognition of the role of women in the energy sector often leads to ‘gender blind’ energy policies as well as their financing and execution. It is therefore critical that policymakers should consider gender norms, roles and relations for men and women and how these affect control over resources, and from there determine their unique energy needs. This calls for joint policymaking between the energy ministry, rural development, water, health, education and other ministries to advance the case for renewable energy. Accordingly, there is a need to carry out research, data collection and analysis (including gender disaggregation), training, education, and to provide technical support to ministries.

5.3 Areas for Further Studies

The study proposes the following areas as qualified for further studies in policy processes in the renewable energy sector. Firstly, this study suggests an investigation of the effectiveness of renewable energy policy implementation tools. The empirical evidence will help uncover the impact of the policy tools on the development of renewable energy in Malawi. The logic behind this proposal is that may be renewable energy development in Malawi has been slow due to ineffective tools. Thus, this may provide a basis for government intervention.

Secondly, the study proposes research on understanding energy democracy. The rationale behind this is that our energy system has traditionally been monopolistic and with the transition to renewable energy, efforts have been to feed the energy produced into the existing grid. However, democratic control of the electricity grid means a large pool of energy policy stakeholders and different socio-technical regimes. Thus, the old, technocratic, closed-door regulatory model of energy may be ill-suited for present conditions and no longer proves satisfactory to anyone involved, including regulators, regulated utilities, and the class formerly known as ‘consumers.’ To this end, research on energy democracy may expose the challenges that the current energy policy is facing as the choices involved in designing transition pathways can no longer be bracketed as non-political.

Thirdly, the study proposes research on the political economy of gender and renewable energy in Malawi. The enquiry behind this is that rural women and children bear the burden of collecting traditional sources of energy for cooking, heating and lighting and this in turn adversely impacts their health and it also draws them away from other productive activities such as education and farming that could have improved their well-being. On the contrary, access to electricity has been linked to gender equality and women’s empowerment by providing women with new opportunities for agency and income. Thus, a study on the political economy on gender and renewable energy will provide insights on how renewable energy affects local development and gender relations in ‘rigid’ patrimonial societies. It will also unearth the complexities and challenges of achieving the SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, and abandonment of traditional energy use.

This study also proposes research on the impact of policy transfers on renewable energy development in Malawi. The reason behind the proposal is that the development and transition to renewable energy is considered as the holy grail of energy security. Hence there are instances where renewable energy policies have been transferred between countries. However, it has to be noted that policy transfer is not just a straightforward process where a ‘borrower’ country simply adopts policies from a ‘lender’ country, but it is a complex process involving many actors—national and international. It is expected that a study on policy transfers will reveal the actors involved in policy transfers, their interests and power dynamics, the motivations and triggers for a policy transfer to occur, as well as enabling factors and barriers for a policy transfer to work as intended. On this note, it is expected that the study will reveal some of the hiccups in renewable energy development in Malawi despite the implemented reforms in the energy sector and a call for private sector participation therein.

Lastly, the study proposes research on energy justice and social acceptance of renewable energy transition in Malawi. The rationale behind this proposal is that since energy justice is a valuable tool in understanding inequalities such as poverty, gender and social class within the context of energy policymaking and infrastructure, an inquiry on this will unearth how procedural, recognition and distributive (in)justices shape transitions to renewable energy technologies. To this end, understanding the contextually rooted perceptions of people living in non-electrified or newly electrified locations will paint a picture on how (lack of) inclusion of all affected stakeholders in decision-making and consultation, (un)equal distribution of risk and ‘elite’ capture of benefits among other things, affect and shape acceptance of transitions to renewable energy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Table Showing Coding of some Quoted Respondents

Referred Respondent 1	Ref. #1
Referred Respondent 2	Ref. #2
Referred Respondent 3	Ref. #3
Referred Respondent 4	Ref. #4

Appendix 2: Time Frame of the Research

The research was carried out in the academic year 2021/2022. The proposal writing was completed by April 2022, with data collection and data analysis to commencing after that in May and June. July and August 2022, were devoted to report writing (the first and second draft), with the final draft completed in September 2022, and this was submitted in the same month.

Activity	Month			
	April	May-June	July-August	September
Proposal Writing				
Data Collection				
Data Analysis				
Report writing (first draft)				
Report writing (second draft)				
Report writing (final draft)				
Submission				

Appendix 3: Budget of the Research

Description	Unit Cost (USD)	Units	Frequency	No. of People	Total (USD)	Total (MWK)
Transportation costs						
Car Hire	39.15	1	10		391.5	400,020
Fuel	1.871	250			467.75	477,928
DSA for Researcher	30		10	1	300	306,528
DSA for Driver	24.46		10	1	244.6	250,000
Other Costs						
Duration Internet Costs	9.79	1	2	1	19.58	20,000
Airtime	2.94	10	1	1	29.20	30,000
Stationery	24.47	1			24.47	25,000
COVID 19 PPEs	14.68	1			14.68	15,000
Contingency					68.51	70,000
T	O	T	A	L	1,560.54	1,594,476
10% compliance fee					156,054	159,447
Grand total					1,716.60	1,753,923

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study

The Politics of Policy Processes: Understanding Actors Promoting Renewable Energy in Malawi

Principal Investigator

Name: Jonathan D.L Manda

Department: Political and Administrative Studies (The University of Malawi)

Address: P.O. Box 280, Zomba

Phone: +265 884 952 838

Email: jonamanda70@gmail.com

Purpose of the Study

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully, and please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to understand how politics of policy processes affect the promotion of renewable energy development in Malawi. This will help to comprehensively explain the policy narratives that suit actors' political interests at the agenda setting stage, the strategies employed by the policy actors to get their ideas and interests at the agenda setting stage of renewable energy policy in Malawi. The study will also explain actors' resources and the way this shapes competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage and the extent to which institutions reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy development in Malawi.

Study Procedures

You are invited to participate in this study because I think you will provide the researcher with information about politics of policy processes in the renewable energy sector. This study will involve 20 participants from public and private organizations whose goal is to achieve universal access to renewable electricity and a sustainable bioenergy sector in Malawi. Each of the participants have been selected from their organizations purposively following a specific criterion befitting the study. Key informant interviews will be administered and will target



those that have knowledge and understanding of the research problem that this study is trying to address, for example; directors, top management and other important officials in renewable energy policy. Approximately each interview will take 40 to 45 minutes.

In this study participants shall firstly be introduced to the focus of the study and how they are to participate. Participants shall be asked open ended questions to enable them to provide as much information on the subject matter. Participants shall throughout the research process be assured of confidentiality and shall be notified of the findings of the study through the reports that shall be developed.

Data collected through this study shall be securely handled by the researcher and his supervisors throughout the study. Qualitative data in form of transcripts shall be verified with the respondents within a week after their participation in the study. Hard copy versions of the information pieces in form of transcripts and scrappy notes from the interviews shall be destroyed a year after the final results of the study have been released.

Benefits

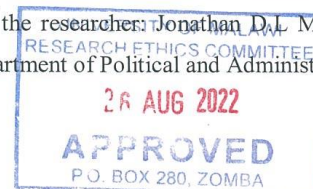
Participation in this study is voluntary as such there will be no payment for participating in these interviews.

Confidentiality

The research data shall only be accessed by the researcher and the supervisory team throughout the research period. To ensure confidentiality of the respondents when conducting the research, personal information of the participants shall not be linked to their responses. All participants shall be identified with the researcher's own designed identification, guided by code names or numbers. After the research is done, data shall be kept for no longer than one year after confirmation of the degree result. The data shall then be destroyed. The data shall prior to the above be stored in a locked drawer, in the researcher's home which shall only be accessed by the researcher.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher: Jonathan D.L. Manda, Master's Research Student, University of Malawi, Department of Political and Administrative



Studies, P.O. Box 280, Zomba, Phone: +265884952838, Email: jonamanda70@gmail.com.
Furthermore, if there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss
with the principal investigator, please contact the Chairperson of the University of Malawi
Research and Ethics Committee, **Professor Allster Munthali** by either emailing to
unimarec@unima.ac.mw or amunthali@unima.ac.mw or by telephoning: +265 888 822 004.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Initials: _____



Mutu wa kafukufuku

Ndale za mndondomeko za boma: Kumvetsetsa adindo opanga ndondomeko za magetsi a mphavu zam'bwezera ku Malawi

Mwini kafukufuku

Dzina: Jonathan D.L Manda

Nthambi ya sukulu: Political and Administrative Studies (Sukulu ya ukachenjede ya University of Malawi)

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Cholinga cha kafukufuku

Mukupemphedwa kutengako gawo ku kafukufuku uyu. Musanapange chiganizo chotenga nawo gawoli, ndikoyenera kuti mumvetse bwino cholinga cha kafukufukuyu komanso zonse zoyenera kuti kafukufukuyu atheke. Pachifukwa chimenechi, chonde werengani mosamalitsa uthenga wotsatirawu ndipo musazengereze kufunsa mafunso pamene sipakumveka kapena pofunika kufotokoza mowonjezera kwa mwini kafukufukuyu.

Cholinga cha kafukufukuyu ndikufuna kumvetsa momwe ndale za mundondomeko za boma zimakhudzira chitukuko cha magetsi a mphamvu za m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi. Kafukufukuyu athandizira kuunikira mfundo zimene adindo amene amapanga ndondomekozi amakhala nazo pofuna kuti zokhumba zawo zikwanilitsidwe pamene akukumana ndi anzawo kuti akambirane zina ndi zina mundondomekoyi, kafukufukuyi aunikiraso njira zimene adindo amagwiritsa ntchito kuti maganizo awo ndi zokhumba zawozimveke pamene akupanga ndondomeko zokhudza magetsi a mphavu ya mphavu ya m'bwezera. Kafukufuku uyu athandiziraso kuti tidziwe zinthu zimene adindo amagwiritsa ntchito ndi momwe zinthuzi zimabweretsera mpikisano mu zokambirana popanga ndondomeko ya magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi, komaso tidziwa momwe malamulo ochitira zinthu amalimbikitsira mfundo zopititsira patsogolo ndondomeko za magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera ndiposo umodzi umene umakhala pakati pa adindo pa nkhaniyi.



Dongosolo la kafukufuku

Mukupemphedwa kutenga nawo gawo mu kafukufuku uyu chifukwa ndikukhulupilira kuti mukhonza kupeleka maganizo ogwira mtima kwa wofufuza wokhuzana ndi ‘momwe ndale za mndondomeko za boma zimakhudzira ntchito zopititsa patsogola magetsi a mphamvu za m’bwezera kuno ku Malawi. Kafukufukuyu apangidwa pogwira ntchito ndi anthu makumi awiri ochokera ku mabungwe amene ndi aboma komanso mabungwe amene si a boma. Otenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyu kuchokera mbali zonse ziwiri asankhidwa pogwiritsa ntchito nkambilano wa mbali ziwiri pamene wina azifunsa mafunso wina nkumayankha (interview) ndipo izi zichitika potsatira iwo amene ali ndi chidziwitso komanso kumvetsetsa kwabwino kwankhaniyi, mwachitsanzo: akuluakulu woyendetsa mabungwe, utsogoleri wa mabungwe, ndi ena omwe amakhudzidwa ndi za magetsi a mphamvu zam’bwezera. Nkambilano uliwonse uzitenga nthawi yosachepera kapena kudutsira mphindi 40 kapena 45.

Aliyense wotenga nawo mbali mu kafukufukuyu, poyamba adzidziwitsidwa cholinga cha kafukufukuyu ndikuwuzidwa momwe angatengeleko gawo. Azafunsidwa mafunso amene amamulola munthu kupeleka kafotokozera pa mutu umene ukukambidwa. Tizatsimikiziranso onse wotenga nawo gawo kuti azasungilidwa chinsinsi mukafukufuku yenseyu ndipo azadziwitsidwa za zotsatira za kafukufukuyu kudzera mu zolembe zimene zizatsindikizidwa pamapeto a zonse.

Uthenga umene uzatoledwe kudzera mu kafukufuku uyu uzasungidwa mosamalitsa ndi wopanga kafukufukuyu ndi womuyang’anira ake. Zolembidwa kuchokera ku nkambirano zizatsimikizidwa ndi ofunsidwa mafunso pakutha kwa sabata limodzi kuchokera patsiku lomwe mkambitsano wachitika. Zolembidwa pa mapepala kuchokera pa nkambirano zizawotchedwa patadutsa chaka chimodzi kuchokera pamene zotsatira zomaliza za kafukufuku zidzatulutsidwe.

Cholowa/Phindu

Kafukufukuyu ndi wa ulele ndipo pachifukwa ichi aliyense otenga nawo gawo akuyenera kudziwa kuti palibepo malipiro kapena cholowa chilichonse.

Chinsinsi

Zokambidwa zonse za kafukufukuyu zizasungidwa mwachinsinsi kwambiri ndipo azaziwone ndi wopanga kafukufukuyu komanso woyang’anira wake yekha basi. Pofuna kuwonesetsa kuti



chinsinsi chikhalepo chochuluka, mayina komanso chinachilichonse chokhuzana ndi otenga nawo gawo sizizalembedwa pa zoyankhula zawo. M'malo mwake wofufuza azagwiritsa ntchito manambala kapena zizindikiro zina zimene azazikonze kuti akhonze kuzindikira iwo amene azatenga mbali ku kafukufukuyu. Pamapeto a zonse mayankho a mafunso onse adzawonongedwa pakutha kwa chaka chimodzi chitulutsireni zotsatira za kafukufukuyu.

Mukafuna kudziwa zambiri

Ngati muli ndi funso lililonse lokhuzana ndi kafukufuku uyu, kapena mwapeza vuto linalililonse kamba kotenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyu, chonde lumikizanani ndi wofufuzayu: Jonathan D. L Manda, wophunzira ku University Malawi, P. O Box 280, Zomba, Phone: +265 884 952 838, Email: jonamanda70@gmail.com. Komanso ngati pali zinthu zina zimene simuli omasuka kukambirana ndi wofufuzayu, mukhonza kulankhulana ndi wapampando wa bungwe limene limayang'anira za kafukufuku ku University ya Malawi **Pulofesa Alister Munthali**, polemba wapampandoyi email: unimarec@unima.ac.mw kapena amunthali@unima.ac.mw kapena poyimba foni pa: +265 888 822 004.

Kutenga gawo mwa ufulu

Palibe munthu amene akukakamizidwa kutenga nawo mbali ku kafukufukuyu. Muli ndi ufulu kutenga nawo gawo kapena ayi. Mukapanga chisankho chotenga nawo gawo muzafunsidwa kusindikidza dzina lanu pa kalata yovomeleza kutenga nawo gawo mwaufulu wanu. Komanso ngakhale mutasayinira kale kalata yotenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyu, mulinso ndi ufulu kuzasiyira panjira kutenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyu ngakhale popanda kupeleka chifukwa chilichonse. Ndipo izi zitakhala choncho sikuti pazakhalanso udani pakati pa inu ndi wopanga kafukufukuyu. Mutapanga chisankho chosiya kutenga nawo gawo panthawi imene kutolera uthenga sikunathe, uthenga umene inu mungakhale kuti munapeleka kale uzabwenzedwa kwa inu kapena kuwonongedwa.

Ndawerenga ndipo ndamvetsetsa uthenga umene wapelekedwa komanso ndakhala nawo mpata wofunsa mafunso. Ndikudziwitsa bwino lomwe kuti ndikutenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyu mwaufulu wanga komanso mwaulele ndi kuti ndili ndi ufulu wosiyira panjira kutenga nawo gawo mu kafukufukuyu ntnhawi ina iliyonse popanda kupeleka zifukwa zilizonse, ndipo, sipazakhala



mulandu. Ndamvetsetsanso kuti ndiyenera kuzapatsidwa kalata yovomeleza kutenga nawo gawo mu kafukufukuyu. Ndipo mwakufuna kwanga mopanda kukakamizidwa ndasankha kutenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyu.

Dzina la wotenga nawo gawo: _____ Tsiku _____

Dzina la wofufuza: _____ Tsiku _____

Chidule cha dzina la wotenga nawo gawo: _____



Appendix 5: Interview Guides

Interview Guide

Introduction

I am Jonathan Daniel Lightwell Manda, a Master of Public Administration and Management student at the University of Malawi. As a requirement for the award of a Master's degree, I am doing a research focusing on **“The Politics of Policy Processes: Understanding Actors Promoting Renewable Energy in Malawi.”** The study aims to understand how politics of policy processes affect the promotion of renewable energy development in Malawi. This will help to comprehensively explain the policy narratives that suit actors' political interests at the agenda setting stage, the strategies employed by the policy actors to get their ideas and interests at the agenda setting stage of renewable energy policy in Malawi. The study will also explain actors' resources and the way this shapes competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage and the extent to which institutions reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy development in Malawi. I am inviting you to participate in this study because I feel that your experience as a policy actor in renewable energy can contribute to my understanding and knowledge on this topic. However, it has to be pointed that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you have the right to refuse or withdraw, that is, you do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to do so and you may stop participating in the [discussion/interview] at any time that you wish. You have to be assured that several steps will be taken to protect your anonymity and identity. While the interviews will be audio-recorded, the recordings will be destroyed once they have been typed up. Furthermore, the typed interviews will not contain any mention of your name, and any identifying information from the interviews will be removed.

Narratives that suit actors' political interests at the agenda setting stage to promote renewable energy development in Malawi:

1. How do renewable energy proposals come into being and what are the forces that shape them?
2. What are some of the renewable energy narratives that you know?
3. What renewable energy narratives are brought to the table when discussing renewable energy development in Malawi?

4. What are the renewable energy narratives that suit political actors' interests at the agenda setting stage to promote renewable energy development in Malawi?
5. What effect do these renewable energy narratives have on the policy actors' decisions?

Strategies that are employed by policy actors to get their renewable energy ideas and interests on the formal agenda of renewable energy policy in Malawi:

1. How is an agenda built?
2. Who participates in the process of building renewable energy agenda in Malawi?
3. Under what conditions do contested renewable energy narratives become viable political alternatives?
4. In oppositional contexts, how do you make sure that your narrative (s) (and of course a set of solutions) get the required attention?
5. What strategies do you apply to maneuver out rival narratives and oppositional players?
6. How do you avoid a debate on an issue? Similarly, how do you prevent some topics from being converted to major issues?

Policy actors' resources and how these resources shape competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage of Malawi's renewable energy policy

1. What are the resources that shape competition for political turf at the agenda setting stage of Malawi's renewable energy policy?
2. What resources are at your disposal that can help to move issues up the formal agenda?
3. How do the resources play a gatekeeping role in controlling the access of specific groups and spokes people to the political turf?
4. How does policy actors' resources promote competition among agendas both within and across policy domains?
5. How does the proportion of financial resources allocated by development partners affect the way renewable energy policy is framed?

The extent to which institutions reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy development in Malawi

1. Can you list some of the institutions which reinforce policy networks and narratives for promoting renewable energy in Malawi?
2. What are the appropriate structures (institutions) for initiating renewable energy policy in Malawi?
3. How significant are institutions in creating different sub-systems that force, holdup, stop or adjust agenda setting in Malawi's renewable energy policy?
4. Do institutions that are in place meet the intentions of policy actors in renewable energy policy in Malawi?
5. Can you explain how the institutions that are in place promote the flow of benefits and costs that policy actors expect

Kalozera wa Zokambirana

Chiyambi

Ine ndine Jonathan Daniel Lightwell Manda, wophunzira wa pasukulu ya ukachenjede ya Chancellor (University of Malawi). Ngati chimodzi mwa zinthu zondiyeneleza kuti nditenge digili ya masters ndikuyenera kupanga kafufuku choncho ndikupanga kafukufuku pa mutu woti **“Ndale za mndondomeko za boma: Kumvetsetsa adindo opanga ndondomeko za magetsi a mphavu zam'bwezera ku Malawi.”** Cholinga cha kafukufukuyu ndikufuna kumvetsa ndale za mndondomeko zaboma zimakhudzila chitukuko cha magetsi a mphavu za m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi. Izi zithandiza kuunikira mfundo zimene adindo omwe amapanga ndondomekozi amakhala nazo pofuna kuti zofuna zawo zikwaniritsidwe pamene akukakumana ndi anzawo kuti akambirane zina ndi zina za mundondomekoyi, kafukufukuyi aunikiraso njira zimene adindo amagwiritsa ntchito kuti maganizo awo ndi zokhumba zawo zimveke pamene akupanga ndondomeko zokhudza magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera. Kafukufuku uyu athandiziraso kuti tidziwe zinthu zimene adindo amagwiritsa ntchito ndi momwe zithuzi zimabweretsera mpikisano muzokambirana popanga ndondomeko ya magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi, komaso tidziwa momwe malamulo ochitira zinthu amalimbikitsira mfundo zopititsira patsogolo ndondomeko za magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera ndiposo umodzi umene umakhala pakati pa adindo pa nkhaniyi. Ndikukupemphani kuti mutenge nawo gawo mu kafukufukuyu chifukwa

ndikukhulupilira kuti muli ndi upangili wabwino ngati mdindo ku mbali yokhuzana ndi magetsi a phamvu yam'bwezera. Dziwani kuti ndi ufulu wanu kutenga nawo gawo mu kafukufuku uyu kapena ayi. Mulinso ndi ufulu kusiyira panjira kutenga nawo gawo mu kafukufuku uyu pamene mwayamba kale. Ndikutsimikizireni kuti chinsinsi chokhuzana ndi inuyo chizasungidwa kwambiri monga munthu wotenga nawo gawo mu kafukufukuyu. Kukambirana kwathu kutepedwa ndi zida zotepela mawu koma dziwani kuti zotepedwazo zizawonongedwa kapena kufufutidwa pamene zotepedwazo zikazangolembedwa. Mudziweso kuti zolembedwa kuchokera ku zotepedwazo sizizakhala ndi dzina lanu. Pomaliza, kalikonse kamene kangapangitse anthu kuti akuzindikireni kuchokera mu zokambirana zathu, kazachotsedwamo.

MFUNDO ZOGWIRIZANA NDI ZOKHUMBA ZA OPANGA NDONDOMEKO ZA BOMA PA NTHAWI YOKAMBIKIRANA ZA KUPITITSA PATSOGOLO NTCHITO ZA MAGETSI A M'BWEZERA KUNO KU MALAWI

1. Kodi ganizo la magetsi a mphavu zam'bwezera limabwera bwanji, nanga ndi zinthu ziti zomwe zimatha kukhudza ganizo lotere?
2. Ndi mfundo ziti zokhudzana ndi magetsi a mphavu za m'bwezera zimene inu mumadziwa?
3. Nanga ndi mfundo ziti zimene zimatuluka mukamakambirana zopititsa patsogolo magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno kumalawi?
4. Kodi ndi mfundo ziti zimene zimagwirizana ndi zolinga/zokhumba za adindo pamene akukambirana za chitukuko cha mphamvu a magetsi a m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?
5. Kodi mfundo zimenezi zimakhudza motani adindo pa ziganizo zawo pomwe iwo akupanga ndondomeko ya kayendetsedwe ka magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?

NJIRA ZIMENE ZIMAGWIRITSIDWA NTCHITO NDI ADINDO KUTI MAGANIZO NDI ZOKHUMBA ZAWO POKAMBIKIRANA NDONDOMEKO YA MAGETSI A MPHAVU ZA M'BWEZERA ZIKWANIRITSIDWE KUNO KU MALAWI

1. Kodi mutu/mfundo yoti ikambidwe imapangidwa bwanji?
2. Kodi ndi ndani amene amatengapo mbali pomanga mfundo zoti zikambidwe pa nkhani ya magetsi a m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?

3. Zimatani kuti mfundo zimene adindo sanagwirizane nazo zifike potengedwa ngati njiranso imodzi yothandiza pa nkhani ya magetsi a mphamvu ya m'bwezera?
4. Nanga pamene mfundo/ndemanga zanu zikukanidwa panthawi yokambirana, mumachita chani kapena mungatani kuti mfundozo zithe kambidwa ndi kuwunikidwa mokwanira?
5. Kodi ndi njira zANJI zimene mukhonza kugwiritsa ntchito kuti mupambane mfundo/ndemanga za anzanu amene akukutsutsani?
6. Kodi mumapewa bwanji mtsutso wosadziwika bwino pa nkhani kapena mfundo? Komanso, kodi mumapewa bwanji kuti mitu ina isakule kukhala mfundo zikuluzikulu zoti zithaso kukambidwa?

ZINTHU ZIMENE ADINDO AMAGWIRITSA NTCHITO NDI MOMWE
ZINTHUNZI ZIMABWERETSERA MPIKISANO MUZOKAMBIKIRANA
POPANGA NDONDOMEKO ZA MAGETSI A MPHAVU YA M'BWEZERA
KUNO KU MALAWI

1. Kodi ndi zinthu zANJI zimene adindo amakhala nazo zimene zimabweretsa mpikisano panthawi yokambirana za ndondomeko ya magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?
2. Kodi ndi zinthu zANJI zimene mulinazo kale zomwe zikhosha kuthandiza kuti zinthu ziyende mosavuta muzokambirana zaboma?
3. Kodi ndi zinthu zotani zimene zingaletse anthu ena kapena magulu a anthu ena kulowa nawo muzokambirana?
4. Kodi zinthu zimene adindo amakhala nazo zimalimbikitsa bwanji mpikisano pa zinthu zomwe akambirane mu ndondomeko ya magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera komaso mu ndondomeko zina? (mwachitsanzo ndondomeko ya maphunziro, sayansi ndi luso)
5. Nanga mulingo wa ndalama zimene zimapelekedwa ndi abwenzu pa chitukuko umakhudza bwanji kapangidwe ka ndondomeko za magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?

MOMWE MALAMULO AMALIMBIKITSIRA MFUNDO ZOPITITSIRA
PATSOGOLO NDONDOMEKO ZA MAGETSI A MPHAVU YAMBWEZERA
KOMASO KUGWIRA NTCHITO PAMODZI PAKATI PA ADINDO PA
NKHANIYI

1. Mungatchuleko malamulo ena amene amalimbikitsa mfundo za magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera komaso kugwirira ntchito pamodzi pakati pa adindo pa nkhani imeneyi kuno ku Malawi?
2. Kodi ndi malamulo otani komaso oyenera amene angayambitse kuti pakhale ndondomeko za magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera?
3. Kodi malamulowa ndiwofunikira bwanji popanga magawo omwe angathe kukakamiza, kuchedwetsa, kuimitsa, kapena kusintha ndondomeko ya magetsi a mphavu za m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?
4. Kodi malamulo amene alipo amakwaniritsa zolinga za adindo opanga ndondomeko za magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?
5. Kodi malamulo amene alipo kale amathandizira bwanji momwe phindu komaso zolowetsa zimayendera pakati pa adindo opanga ndondomeko ya magetsi a mphavu ya m'bwezera kuno ku Malawi?