



**AN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION IN MALAWI: A
CASE OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN SHIRE HIGHLANDS EDUCATION DIVISION**

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is substantively my own effort and it has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Acknowledgements have been duly made where other people's works have been used.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Malita Mafuli and my brother, Justin Nyambalo for the love and support rendered to me through the study journey. Their availability and support were a great encouragement and hence, instrumental to my study's success.

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ABSTRACT

The study employed qualitative exploratory case study research design to analyse education key stakeholders' perspectives in the implementation of secondary school fee abolition in Malawi. Two secondary schools in Shire Highlands Education Division, a boarding and a Community Day Secondary School, were purposively selected. Twenty seven participants, comprising parents, students, PTA members, head teachers and the EDM, were purposively selected. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. Generally, the findings indicated that parents, students and the PTA did not know about the school fees abolition even when it was being implemented while head teachers and the EDM knew it but at the stage of implementation. The theoretical framework that informed the study was top-down policy implantation models by Sabatier (1986), in which authority, in this case government, simply gave directives to grassroots implementers without engaging them at stage of the fees abolition formulation. Therefore, a lot of challenges such as high boarding fees and the PTA fund which caused much drop out among poor students were encountered. Parents would like government to shoulder boarding fees and PTA fund so that themselves be paying the little ones: tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book fund so that their financial burdens may be lessened. Head teachers would like government to be purchasing teaching and learning resources for schools so that PTA fund should not be hiked frequently. The study may contribute to filling of gaps in knowledge in Malawi's National Education Policy goal of promoting equitable access to secondary education to all children.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAMFED Campaign for Female Education

CDF Constituency Development Fund

CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
EDM	Education Division Manager
EDO	Education Division Office
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
ESPR	Education Sector Performance Report
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	Free Primary Education
ISEM	Improving Secondary Education in Malawi
LDF	Local Development Fund
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NEP	National Education Policy
NESIP	National Education Sector Improvement Plan
NPC	National Planning Commission
PTA	Parents and Teachers' Association
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations
SEED	Secondary Education Expansion for Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

SMC School Management Committee

UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

The chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, main research question, sub research questions, main objective, specific research objectives and significance of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Malawi is a signatory to the Dakar 2000 Framework for Action which aimed at making basic education free by 2015 and Education for All (EFA). These are also in line with Sustainable Development Goal number 4 which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. In line with this, Malawi 2063 desires not just to reduce poverty but to end it. According to National Planning Commission (NPC) (2020), Malawi 2063 vision resolves to have the country not largely depending on development aid but creating wealth on its own. Malawi 2063 vision desires to see the country being among the upper middle-income countries by 2063. To achieve this, the vision has included enabler number five, which is human capital development. This enabler, ensures that the country should have a highly knowledgeable people with quality education that incorporates a strong element of academic excellence and technical and vocational skills fit for the labour market, entrepreneurship and implementation of vision. Hence, every constituency in the country shall have a well-equipped and staffed primary and secondary school. The government will make it compulsory that every child should attain twelve years of formal education (National Planning Commission, 2020). This implies that barriers to access to secondary education due to poverty, must be removed.

According to National Education Policy, (NEP) of Government of Republic of Malawi (2013), after the political transition from one party to multi-party system, the government introduced the Free Primary Education policy in order to increase access to basic education in the country. Furthermore, Government of Republic of Malawi (2013) argues that the Free Primary Education was instituted without an overall education policy framework. The introduction of the free primary education policy caused tremendous increase in enrolment in all primary schools of the country.

Like the cases of Lesotho, Kenya and Uganda, the adoption of universal primary education in Malawi was largely triggered by political demand rather than rational planning process (Avenstrup, Liang, and Nellemann (2004).

Implementation of the free primary education policy markedly increased enrollment. Additionally, it increased gender equity as well as equity in enrollment between the poor and the rich. However, access to primary education was achieved at the expense of education quality, and the quantitative gains made through free primary education has been undermined by the failure of the system to retain pupils once they had enrolled (Avenstrup, Liang, and Nellemann 2004). Among some reasons for school drop-out included poverty of parents which lead to failure to buy pens, note books, school uniforms and pay school development fund.

According to Chimombo, Meke, Zeitlyn, and Lewin (2014), one of the determinants of transition from primary school and persistence in secondary school in Malawi is economic status and poverty levels of the households. Some students who successfully get selected into public secondary schools fail to go and start secondary school education due to poverty of their parents (Chimombo et al 2014). For instance, according to Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), of, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, (2019), only less than fifty percent of learners who sit for Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations transition to secondary schools. The transition rate is shown below.

Table 1: Transition Rate to Secondary School from 2015 to 2018 (from EMIS of 2019)

	PERCENTAGE	
YEAR	BOYS	GIRLS
2015	34	36

2016	33	35
2017	40	35
2018	40	35

According to Ministry of Education Science and Technology, MoEST (2019), if all conditions were well, all learners who graduate from primary education were supposed to progress to secondary schools. However, this is not the case in Malawi because of lack of space in public secondary schools, poverty of parents to finance their children's secondary education and poor performance at Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) among other reasons. Other learners who happen to start secondary education fail to get up to form four due to lack of financial support for their education (Chimombo et al, 2014).

In addition, the results of Malawi Secondary Education Expansion for Development (SEED) Impact for Evaluation Baselines Survey for Impact indicate that fifty eight percent of retrospective students who dropped out of school cited lack of money for fees or school uniform as a reason for drop.

The existence of the many secondary education bursaries and scholarships which help the needy and orphan students in Malawi's secondary schools is a clear indication that many parents, who send their children to public secondary schools, are very poor such that it is very difficult for them to finance their children's education. For instance, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2019), indicates the existence of the following secondary school bursaries: Government, UNICEF, CAMFED, ISEM, and Press Trust. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2019), records that 24,336 students benefited from these bursaries and scholarships in 2017/218. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2019) further argues that the number of

secondary school government bursaries has increased tremendously by 288 percent from 3,165 in 2010 to 14,499 in 2018. The government of Malawi introduced the government bursary scheme in order to increase access and retention of boys and girls in secondary education.

According to Malawi National Education Sector Improvement Plan (NESIP) (2020-2030), low access to secondary education is attributed to high cost of secondary education.

Furthermore, in an effort to relieve poor Malawian families of financial burdens related to secondary school education expenses, in September, 2018, Malawi Government announced the abolition of all school fees starting with tuition fees in all public secondary schools and Community Day Secondary Schools with immediate effect and that by January 2019, all forms of fees like text book revolving fund, and general purpose fund would be removed too [NESIP (2020-2030), the 2018/2019 Education Sector Performance Report of Ministry of Education and Technology, (2019) and The Nation on Sunday, (November, 8, 2020)]. The exceptions were to be boarding fees and occasional development funds. In his statement, the Minister of Education stated that the Malawi Government is answering to the call by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4.1 on quality education which ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. The goal among others calls for universal primary and secondary education, by removing barriers such as poverty which keep many kids around the world out of school (Sustainable Development Goals 2030). According to the Minister of Education, there would be no any form of fees in day secondary schools. NESIP (2020- 2030), states that, among other issues, between 2020 and 2030, secondary education will focus on increasing access to secondary education with a long-term view of having free and compulsory secondary education.

The 2018/2019 Education Sector Performance Report of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2019), calls the abolition of fees in secondary education, a major policy change in secondary education sub-sector. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2019) argues that with the removal of tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book fund, enrolment in formal secondary schools which was around three hundred thousand (Education Management Information System, 2019), would increase.

The announcement of fees abolition was made as Malawi was heading towards fresh presidential elections. In terms of timing of the fees removal, both the free primary education policy and the school fees abolition took place when the political parties were assuming government or campaigning to govern the country. According to the review of The Nation on Sunday, (8 November, 2020), the removal of tuition fees, general purpose fund, text book fund was announced on the radio on twenty fifth of September, 2018 prior to the 2019 tripartite elections. Addressing the public, the Minister of Education stated that government was being committed to making secondary education equitable and accessible to all children in Malawi, hence the removal of fees. In his statement, the Minister said that students in day secondary schools and Community Day secondary Schools would essentially be required to pay no kwacha to school except for occasional development project contributions. However, boarding secondary school students would continue to pay boarding fees and that all students would continue to pay Malawi National Examination Board Fees.

Clarifying on occasional development projects in schools, the Minister stated that if there would be any development project at the school, the School Management Committee and the Parent Teachers' Association would agree on how much parents should pay towards the same. According to the Minister, schools doing some development projects should also make use of the Local

Development Fund, (LDF), and Constituency Development Fund, (CDF), so that the parents are relieved from paying for every development project of the school. This was in line with the government's objective of removing the barriers to secondary school access for the children from poor families. The general public was excited, expecting that secondary education will be cheaper as it is with primary education. However, the declaration of fees abolition did not mean secondary education has been made fully free as it was in 1994 with primary education freeness' declaration (Malawi Secondary Education Expansion for Development (SEED)).

According to Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010), one of the dimensions of policy implementation is policy formulation which engages all stakeholders at all policy stages. According to Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010), policy formulation should engage all stakeholders. Klienvink, Janssen and Tan (2012), further argue that in decision making and policy issues, direct stakeholder engagement is very crucial because it increases public understanding of issues at hand and enhances successful implementation. However, it is not known if the Malawi's fees abolition in public secondary schools has sought and incorporated the views, suggestions and opinions of head teachers, teachers, parents, students and Parents and Teachers' members, even though these are key stakeholders whose suggestions would ensure a successful implementation. This is evidenced through the speech of the secretary for education in part of the letter to Education Divisions Offices, some few days before the announcement of abolition of all school fees; "As you are aware that the 2018/2019 academic year starts from 10th September, 2018. I write to advise that you should delay the collection and receipt of tuition fees from students for the 2018/2019 academic year. You will receive further instructions on the same in due course....I would like to appeal to all division managers to make sure that the contents of this circular letter is urgently brought to the attention of all headmasters for information and implementation" (Wongani ,Chiuta

and Owen Khamula –Nyasa Times, September 7, 2018). Since this part of the letter indicates that at this stage, the issue of abolishing fees is coming to the education divisions and school head teachers for their information and implementation, it shows that the certainty of policy makers and the implementers at grassroots engaging each other, regarding the same, is not known. The effecting of fee abolition came as political directive so that the contents of policy should forthwith be implemented. Hence, there is a need to conduct a study to analyse the implementation of this school fees abolition policy reform by the grassroots stakeholders.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to Masango (2001) engagement between policy makers and local implementers is needed for the success of policy implementation. Similarly, Jeffery (2009) argues that early stakeholder engagement among stakeholders ensures successful policy process. Jeffery (2009) further emphasizes that for a policy to serve the interest of intended beneficiaries, then such beneficiaries must be engaged at early stage so that they bring their input into the policy at hand. This implies that if there is no early engagement between the policy makers and implementers, challenges are faced at implementation stage. Malawi government announced the abolition of tuition fees, general purpose fund and textbook fund in all public secondary schools in an attempt to enhance equity and access of secondary education for all children who pass their Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations [NESIP (2020-2030); The 2018/2019 Education Sector Performance Report of MoEST (2019) and The Nation on Sunday, (November, 8, 2020)]. According to the Minister of education, the fees abolition was expected to lessen financial burden of parents on education of their children.

However, for Malawi's school fees abolition policy reform, it is not known whether key stakeholders at grassroots: parents, students, PTA members, head teachers and the Education

Division Manager, were engaged in its formation to give their views on how it should be implemented. The fee abolition came as a directive, asking education divisions and school head teachers to implement it. Therefore, there is need to understand how education key stakeholders at grassroots: parents, students, head teachers, PTA members and the Education Division Manager implement the school fee abolition as it “hits the ground”.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to analyse the implementation of secondary school fees abolition in Malawi through the views of education key stakeholders such as head teachers, parents, learners and Parents and Teachers’ Association members and the Education Manager.

1.5 Main Research Question

How do education key stakeholders implement the Malawi’s fee abolition in public secondary schools?

1.6 Sub Research Questions

1. What are education key stakeholders’ knowledge and roles in the implementation of the school fees abolition in public secondary schools?
2. What do education key stakeholders perceive as successes and challenges in the implementation of Malawi’s school fees abolition in public secondary schools?
3. How do education key stakeholders feel the Malawi’s school fees abolition in public secondary schools should be implemented?

1.7 Main Research Objective

To analyse the views of key stakeholders in the implementation of school fee abolition in Malawi’s public secondary schools.

1.8 Specific Research Objectives

- To find out the knowledge and roles of parents, students, PTA members head teachers and the EDM, in the implementation of school fee abolition in Malawi's public secondary schools
- To make inquiry on what parents, students, PTA members and the EDM perceive as strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of school fees abolition in public secondary schools in Malawi
- To determine how the education key stakeholders: parents, students, PTA members, head teachers and the EDM, feel the secondary school fee abolition should be implemented

1.9 Significance of the Study

Since this study is digging deep into participation of stakeholders in the implementation of school fees abolition in public secondary schools in Malawi, with emphasis on the need for engagement of stakeholders before the onset of the policy and its implication on implementation, it may contribute to fill the gaps in areas of importance of early stakeholder engagement for in policy process and its results.

In addition, since this study also discusses issues of equity in access to secondary education, it may also contribute to fill the gaps in knowledge in the Malawi's National Education Policy goal of promoting equitable access to secondary education to all Malawian children from both poor and the rich households.

Lastly, since attainment of secondary education has a potential of enhancing economic development of the nation, Government of the Republic of Malawi, (2016), then this study, which is highlighting issues on the ground regarding the implementation of school fees abolition in

secondary schools in Malawi, may fill the gaps of knowledge in the field of education and economic development.

1.10 Chapter Summary

The chapter has discussed background to the study, research problem, purpose of the study, main research question, sub-research questions, main research objective and specific objectives and significance of the study. The next chapter will present related literature and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents literature related to this study. It features definition of a stakeholder in policy making. It further presents the importance of engagement between policy makers and implementers before a policy is introduced. The literature also presents the definition of policy implementation and description of policy implementation success. The literature then presents how stakeholders in other countries implemented their free secondary education policy, the nature of engagement between policy makers and stakeholders at grassroots such as parents and head

teachers, successes and challenges which such countries registered, and how they addressed some of the challenges. Gaps were identified which this study has filled. The literature review is then followed by theoretical framework.

2.2 Definition of Stakeholders

Before getting into the definition of key stakeholders, it is important to know some basic definitions of a stakeholder and stakeholder identification and analysis.

Freeman (1984), defines a stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of organisation's objectives.

According to Nutt and Backoff, (1992) stakeholders are all parties who will be affected by or will affect the organisation's strategy.

Eden and Ackermann (1998), define stakeholders as People or small groups with power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organisation.

As for Johnson and Scholes, (2002), stakeholders are individuals or groups who depend on the organisation to fulfill their own goals and on whom, in turn, the organisation depends.

From the definitions of Freeman (1984), Nutt and Backoff, (1992), Eden and Ackerman (1998) and Johnson and Scholes, (2002), three common ideas can be picked. First, a stakeholder has something to gain or lose from an activity in question. Second, stakeholders can be individuals, institutions, organisations or groups of people. Third, stakeholders can be directly involved in the activity or can simply be affected by it. It is interesting to note that the definition of (Eden and Ackermann, 1998) recognizes that some stakeholders have power to respond, negotiate with, and change strategic future of the organisation. This implies that some members of an organisation

have powers while others do not have powers. Therefore, if care is not taken, a manager gets tempted to regard only those people with power as stakeholders leaving out those without powers.

In the case of secondary education in Malawi context, some members like donors or funders are powerful in terms of decision making. Students and parents benefit from or are affected by the decisions made by these powerful members. School head teachers, PTA members and teachers implement government policies at school level. Government officials direct head teachers and division officials on what to do and how to carry out the policy or programme implementation processes. The non-governmental organisations make suggestions and opinions and sometimes provide financial support. All these parties form education stakeholders in Malawi. Therefore, their voices should be heard and put into consideration. The definitions of stakeholder give a platform for policy makers to choose the best groups to work with in achieving education policy objectives. Otherwise, wrong groups of persons can be chosen and they are likely to make wrong decisions in education.

This study adopts the definition of Freeman (1984): “A stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of organisation’s objectives”. In this regard, whether a person is just a beneficiary of school fees abolition, helps in its implementation or has power to change the implementation procedure, he or she is included in the definition. In that way all relevant persons that are involved in some way in the school fees abolition, are included in Freeman (1984)’s definition.

2.3 Definition Key Stakeholders

According to Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2018), key stakeholders are those people whose interests are directly affected by an activity, or who have power or influence to advance or stop an activity. As for Bourne (2009), a key stakeholder is a

stakeholder who, if left out, has power to prevent the project from achieving its full set of objectives and has potential to cause the project to fail. Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2018), however, argues that key stakeholders vary according to issue under consideration and the context.

2.4 Key stakeholders in Education

Therefore, from the definitions above, key stakeholders in education can be defined as any individual, group or organisation whose interests are directly affected by the educational activity, policy or programme, or who have power or influence to advance or make educational activity, policy or programme fail. Therefore, for the success of policy implementation, all education key stakeholders must be engaged accordingly.

According to Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2018), depending on context, the following can be education key stakeholders: Ministry of Finance, Teachers Union, international bodies such as World Bank, United Nations, Australian Aid; Business associations, Teachers and students.

In this study, the key stakeholders the researcher dealt with were the education division manager, school head teachers, parents or students' guardians, and members of the Parents' and Teachers' Association, (PTA), and students.

The education division manager was considered to be education key stakeholder because she is the bridge between the Ministry of education headquarters and the schools. All education policies to be implemented in secondary schools pass through her. She also receives feedback from schools on the implementation of education policies.

Head teachers were considered to be education key stakeholder because they help in collecting fees from students, help in finding bursaries for poor students, get involved in revising fees in liaison with the Parents' and Teachers' Association and School Management Committee. In addition, school secondary school head teachers know how hard it is to run secondary school without enough funds.

Students are the ones who are affected when their parents fail to pay fees in that they cannot be allowed to learn. Some students pay the school fees on their own.

Parents were considered key stakeholders because they are the ones who pay the fees. Parents feel painful when their children cannot be allowed to learn when they have not paid fees.

Parents' and Teachers' Association members know financial problems that schools face when students fail to pay school fees. They are also involved in revising school fees when need arises.

Hence, these people were considered to be key education stakeholders in this study.

2.5 Policy Implementation and Policy Success

According to Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) policy implementation is a process or activities aimed at accomplishing the goals of the policy. Furthermore, Meter Van and Horn (1974) hold that policy implementation encompasses those actions by public or private individuals or groups that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions. As for Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010), policy implementation primarily emphasizes the mechanism, resources and relationships that link policies to program action. Jorgensen, Bhuyan and Sharma further argues that policies, once adopted are not always implemented as envisioned at the beginning and do not necessarily achieve intended results. This implies that policy adoption does not necessarily mean the problems previously faced will be solved. It must depend on the

successful implementation. According to Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010), among some dimensions in policy implementation are stakeholder engagement at all stages of the policy process, planning and resource mobilisation for implementing, feedback on progress and results of implementing. That is, these dimensions must be respected to ensure a successful policy implementation. Therefore, this study among others, strived to find out if the fees abolition in Malawi engaged grassroots stakeholders at its inoculation, was being reviewed to monitor its progress, in terms of ascertaining if it was being implemented as designed, working towards achievement of its set goals such achieving the goal of increasing access to secondary education for all, and if it was given resources for its implementation. These were used as yard stick to tell if the implementation of the school fees abolition in Malawi was a success story.

2.6 Importance of Stakeholder Engagement in Policy Making in Relation with Implementation

According to Alemanno (2015), stakeholder engagement is the practice of involving members of the public in the process of policy making.

For the success of policy, early stakeholder engagement is of paramount importance at all stages (Jeffery, 2009). According to Jeffery (2009), as opposed to shareholders engagement, where one looks at maximizing profits, disregarding the good relationships with clients, stakeholder engagement regards every person affected or has interest in the policy, to be very important in the organisation's objective achievement. That is, even if some stakeholders seem not have power, they must be engaged and their views must be listened to and considered when formulating or implementing the organisation's policy.

Jeffery, (2009), further argues that early stakeholder engagement ensures successful policy implementation. Jeffery (2009) argues that when stakeholders are engaged right from the

beginning, all stakeholders are satisfied with the outcomes of the policy. Jeffery (2009) asserts that, in such a case, conflicts and tension among members of an organisation or company regarding the policy, are prevented. Jeffery (2009) further argues that when an organisation does not actively engage stakeholders, crisis may arise which forces it to engage the stakeholders. Despite calm that may result from the engagement, reputation of the organisation is lost and society members lose trust in the organisation and its leaders. Jeffery (2009) simply stated that when an organisation has not actively engaged stakeholders, crisis arises but did not clearly state what happens when there is no any engagement with some key stakeholders of the policy. Hence, this study strived to find out the type of challenges that have arisen in the implementation of the fees abolition as it is not known if government made early engagement with parents, students, head teachers and PTA members before rolling out the secondary school fees abolition.

In addition, the studies of Midgley et al (1986) on community participation, social development and the state in London, found that engagement of citizens in policy process makes governments to survive on the basis that citizens find such governments legitimate. Midgley et al. (1986) argue that when the government engages various citizens, even at local levels, in the policy making and implementation process, such governments gain public support. When there is no citizen engagement, the contrary happens. For example, Republic of South Africa (1998), testifies that during apartheid era in South Africa, the engagement of local citizens, especially the blacks, in policy making and implementation, was severely lacking. It was mainly limited to compliance. Therefore, the majority of citizens who were not engaged, perceived the government to be illegitimate. Such perceptions brought anger and frustration which were manifested through boycotts and protest actions against public policies. The study of Midgley et al. (1986) simply stated that when government engage local citizens, the government gain public support and that if

it does not, the contrary happens. It did not state how the local citizens who are not satisfied would wish how government should do the things. Hence this study strived to find out how parents, students, head teachers, PTA members and the EDM would wish the secondary school fees abolition should be implemented.

In the similar manner, Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011), argue that continuous engagement enriches participants with knowledge and information of policy being reviewed or proposed. The survey which Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011) conducted in New Zealand on evaluating public inputs on national park management, indicated that many respondents acknowledged that their being engaged helped them to know issues in the national park management plan review. With such a knowledge, participants were able to give their comments on the issues. Similarly, the study of Masango (2001) on Public Participation in Policy-making and Implementation, with specific reference to the Port Elizabeth Municipality, shows that stakeholder engagement is important for information sharing between policy makers and grassroots stakeholders. This implies that without continuous engagement, members of the community cannot know contents of policies or programmes and hence cannot make any comment, suggestion or express their interests and get involved for the successful policy implementation.

Finally, the findings of Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011), indicate that when people are engaged in policy process, they have a spirit of ownership to the issue at hand. According to Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011), the engagement of people regarding national park issues made them own the national park management review process. This agrees with the finding of Bhusal (2018) on examining citizen participation in local policy making in Nepal. Bhusal (2018) found that engagement at bottom level forums made local participants happy to be involved and

get an opportunity to be informed about budgets for their own municipality, policies and future plans and programmes. Bhusal (2018), however, notes that while local participants at lower level became happy to be owners of the policy making and to become informed about the issues intended to benefit themselves, participants at upper level forums were more focused on decisions or final policy itself. This shows that local people are not usually involved in the final decisions in the policy process.

The literature reviewed has indicated that engagement among all stakeholders, leads to a successful policy implementation. Hence, this study strived to find out the nature of policy implementation whose early engagement with grassroots stakeholders is not certain.

2.7 Importance of Stakeholder Engagement in Educational Policy Implementation

Nantale (2024) argues that stakeholder engagement in educational policy is a key factor in determining the policy's effectiveness and successful implementation. According to Nantale (2024), through stakeholder engagement, decisions made by educational policy makers are based on a range of inputs provided by affected and engaged stakeholders. Therefore, decisions, in the end, become more legitimate since they are based on views and data provided by a range of stakeholders, individuals, groups, organisations and professional networks. To sum up, Nantale (2024) argues that stakeholder engagement in education ensures transparency, accountability, increased equitability of policy outcomes and greater relevance of proposed initiatives and strategies. Hence, this study strived to find out the implication of not engaging parents, students, head teachers, PTA members and the EDM in the formation of the fees abolition in Malawi on the effectiveness and successfulness of its implementation.

2.8 Successes and Challenges Faced in the implementation of Free Secondary Education Policy in Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania

2.8.1 Successes Registered

The studies of Adan and Orodho (2015), which aimed at finding out constraints of implementing free secondary education in Mandera West Sub-County Kenya, whose objective was to increase access to secondary education for both the poor and the rich, found that free secondary education enabled the government to achieve increased enrolment and retention in secondary schools. This finding is similar to that of Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo, (2014) who also found that free secondary education, in Tanzania, brought about high enrolment in schools. However, there was some drop outs due to failure of parents to make other school contributions arguing that since secondary education was free it should be free in everything. In both Tanzania and Kenya, parents got wrong message regarding the policies Adan and Orodho (2015) and Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo, (2014). This implies that the parents were poorly engaged, on how the policy should be implemented, before the policies were effected. Their policy implementation was very poor because government did not make communication with parents. Despite this, at least one success, which is increased access to secondary education, was registered through the implementation of free secondary education policy. However, some drop outs started for parents' failure to pay other fees.

The study of Abdul Nurdeen, Abdul Basit, Abdul Ahmed and Abdul Salma (2018) indicates that there was no misinformation regarding the policy. This implies that there could be early engagement between the government of Ghana, school administrators and parents before the free senior high policy was effected. The government understood the needs of the people at grassroots. Hence, government removed all forms of fees as requested by the stakeholders. As a result, in Ghana the success in the implementation of free senior high school policy was realised through

the reduction of disparity in access to secondary education between the poor and the rich (Abdul Nurdeen, Abdul Basit, Abdul Ahmed and Abdul Salma, 2018). According to the study of Abdul Nurdeen, Abdul Basit, Abdul Ahmed and Abdul Salma (2018), which aimed at evaluating the appropriateness of free senior high school policy in replacing the pre-existing progressive free policy in Ghana, the introduction of free senior high school policy made it possible for poor parents to send their children to school unlike in the past where many children from poor families failed to pay fees. With the removal of library fees, boarding fees, examination fees, science laboratory fees, text book fees; all children in Ghana, who were selected, had a chance to enroll into secondary schools (Abdul Nurdeen et al, 2018). Similar findings were observed in the studies of Adan and Orodho (2015), on constraints of implementing free secondary education in Mandera West Sub-County in Kenya, where many children from poor families enrolled into secondary education due to introduction of free secondary education. In Kenya, however, there was poor engagement between the government and the parents (Adan and Orodho, 2015). There was misinformation regarding the policy. Parents thought that free secondary education meant that school free in everything. Lack of true information made parents to refuse to pay other forms of fees to school. In addition, drop out continued due to parents' negligence by failing to force their children to go to school always, and early pregnancies, among girls.

The study of Abdul Nurdeen et al. (2018) in Ghana and that of Adan and Orodho (2015) in Mandera West Sub-county, Kenya have indicated that proper engagement of grassroots stakeholders regarding the free secondary education policy led to success of the policy, like increase in access to secondary education among the poor, while misinformation in the engagement led to poor policy implementation, like refusal of parents to make any financial contribution to school. However, the studies did not consider a situation where the engagement

among stakeholders is done or not but there are some new fees introduced due to removal of the said fees. Hence, this study strived to find out if the implementation of Malawi's school fees abolition in public secondary schools could help increase access to secondary education for the poor, considering that new fee, termly-paid PTA fund was introduced.

The study of Hakielimu, (2017), on impact of implementation of free education policy on basic education, which include junior secondary schools, conducted in Tanzania, found that one success registered through the implementing free secondary education was that increased access to secondary education for girls from poor households. This finding is similar to that of Cherotich, Simatwa, and Ayodo, (2014) on impact of free secondary education policy on gender equality in secondary school education in Kenya: A case study of Kericho County, in which free secondary education policy helped many girl children, in poor families, enroll into secondary schools than in the past where boys were opted when financial challenges forced parents to make a choice between a boy or girl child. However, in Tanzania, government did not engage parents well regarding the policy. Therefore, as in Kenya, parents in Tanzania felt that free secondary education meant that education was free in everything. Hence, some students were sent home for failure to pay fees (Hakielimu, 2017). As such, access to secondary education also started to decrease.

Therefore, where there was proper early engagement among stakeholders like government and parents there was successful implementation and increase in access to secondary education was achieved. On the contrary, poor engagement led to poor participation in implementation and decreased access to secondary education.

2.8.2 Challenges Faced

2.8.2.1 Government Funding

The studies of Goda (2018), carried out in ten schools of Singida municipality in Tanzania which aimed at investigating the capacity of heads of public secondary schools in the implementation of free secondary education policy, found that despite the benefit of increasing school enrolment, free secondary education faced many challenges. For instance, Goda (2018) found that schools which were featured, experienced inadequate funds to cater for some of the school needs. According to Goda (2018), since secondary school education was declared free, there was high enrolment such that teaching and learning materials procured using government funds could not suffice for all students. The findings of Goda, (2018) also revealed that most school heads in Singida municipality performed well in terms of financial management. Therefore, inadequacy of funds to cater for school needs could not be associated with the school heads' financial mismanagement. Goda (2018) did not indicate anywhere that there was engagement between the government and school head teachers to foresee problems that could arise due to introduction of the policy and how they would overcome them. The introduction of the free secondary education policy saw schools lamenting lack of enough teaching and learning materials due high enrolment. The funds which the government gave schools were not adequate for new enrolment. Early engagement between stakeholders paves the way for parties to scrutinise the policy and make necessary suggestions and preparations for its success (Jeffery, 2009). Early, engagement could assist stakeholders remind one another the need to source funds to cater for the expected high enrolment.

Another challenge which stakeholders faced in the implementation of free secondary education in Tanzania was overcrowded classes (Goda 2018). According to Goda, (2018), since many children had access to secondary education due to declaration of free education, school enrolment arose sharply. Goda (2018) has not indicated that the government and school head teachers made prior

engagement regarding the policy and how to source funds for the construction of classrooms to accommodate the expected increased enrolment. In addition, Goda (2018) has not explained whether all eligible students were allowed to enroll into public secondary schools but the United Republic of Tanzania (2019), in Tanzania's Education Sector Performance Report of (2018/2019), indicates that pupils who pass Primary School Leaving Examination are selected to various public secondary schools. However, parents freely opted to send their children either to public or non-government secondary schools. It shows that many parents opted to send their children to public secondary schools. As such, the school rooms in Tanzania's Singida Municipality were overcrowded. Similar findings were observed in the study of Majumba, (2019) on challenges administrators faced in implementing fee-free secondary education in Badi district, Tanzania. Majumba (2019) found that due to introduction of fee-free secondary education classrooms were overcrowded such that teacher's movement to help students with problems during the lesson delivery was very difficult. As such, some learners were not assisted accordingly. Both Majumba (2019) and Goda (2018) have not indicated that there was engagement between government and school administrators regarding how the policy would be implemented to ensure that the issue of inadequacy of learning rooms was addressed before the policy rolled out. Hence, the implementation of the policy faced challenge of lack of enough classrooms. Classes were overcrowded, making teaching difficult. This could surely be avoided if there was engagement between the government and school administrators who could consider how to source funds for classrooms construction. This study strived to find out whether there was engagement between the government and school head teachers, parents, students, PTA and the EDM before the Malawi's secondary school fees abolition began, to share views on how it should be implemented and the challenges faced if there was no early engagement.

In addition, in Tanzania, shortage of teachers was noted to be a challenge in the implementation of free secondary education. The findings of Hakielimu (2017) and Lugongo (2016), in Tanzania, which aimed at analyzing the implementation of free education in basic education, revealed that fee free education led to shortage of teachers especially in secondary schools, mainly those teaching science subjects. This prompted school heads to hire temporary teachers. Since, there was no fund for such teachers, head teachers resorted to collecting monetary contributions from parents to pay the hired teachers. Later government urged head teachers to stop collecting the money from parents. This finding concurs with that of Goda (2018), who noted that free secondary education led to overwhelming workload by teachers who had to teach too many periods. Similar findings were found in the studies of Mashala, (2000) on examining impact of the implementation of free secondary education policy on secondary education in Tanzania. Mashala (2000) found that due to implementation of free secondary education, government was challenged by its inability to recruit adequate teachers to match with the increased secondary school enrolment. According to Mashala (2000), although, the government of Tanzania had been trying to recruit new secondary school teachers, the number recruited was very small. As such teachers were overburdened and education quality was compromised. The studies of Hakielimu (2017) and Lugongo (2016) found that the introduction of free secondary education led to shortage of teachers mainly those teaching science subjects and that in trying to address the challenge, school head teachers resorted to collecting money from students to pay temporary hired teachers, a thing which the government later urged to stop. However, the studies have not clarified how the government officials engaged with school head teachers and parents on issues of collection of school levies and school development funds taking place at school. By urging the schools to stop collecting money from parents, it shows that there could be some problems between the government and other key

stakeholders in engaging one another on how to get the money to pay the hired teachers. Jeffery (2009) argues that early engagement between stakeholders helps in the sharing of knowledge and contents of policy among stakeholders. In that way, conflicts and tensions among stakeholders are prevented, (Jeffery, 2009).

Furthermore, the studies of Adan and Orodho (2015) on constraints in the implementation of free secondary education in Mandela West Sub-county, in Kenya, found that one challenge that stakeholders faced in the implementation of free secondary education, was government's late funding to secondary schools. Adan and Orodho (2015) found that government disbursed funds to secondary schools very late after the schools had suffered several months without funds. This affected the planning of school activities to do with money. For instance, due to late funding, there was late procurement of teaching and learning materials; late payment of non-teaching staff and using money budgeted for development on wages for hired teachers. This finding agrees with that of Majumba (2019), on challenges facing secondary school administrators in effective implementation of fee-free education provision in Bahi district in Tanzania, where he discovered that some school administrators were caught stranded due to government's delay in giving them funds such that they resorted to borrow money from people who trusted them to pay back after government would honor their responsibility. The similar findings were also noted in the study of Khamati and Nyogesa (2013) which aimed determining factors influencing the implementation of free secondary education in Mumias district, Kenya, where capitation and development funds which were being given to schools, were not adequate and were not disbursed in time. As such, school head teachers failed to buy and pay for facilities required by the schools in the teaching and learning process. Hence quality of education was compromised. Both studies of Adan and Orodho (2015) and Nyogesa (2013) have not indicated if there was prior engagement between the

government and school officers to scrutinise the possible problems which schools would face when schools would start implementing the free secondary education policy, like late funding, and how they would deal with them. As a result, schools complained of late funding from government which affected them negatively. This study labored to find out if there was increase in funding for the school fees abolition and if there was no increase, what problems secondary schools faced in implementing the policy reform.

2.8.2.2 Students' Drop out and Indiscipline

According to Adan and Orodho (2015), some of the challenges stakeholders faced in implementing free secondary education policy were students' drop out and indiscipline. Students were supposed to get involved in the implementation of the free secondary education policy by attending school daily. Adan and Orodho (2015), found that in Mandela West Sub-County, some students were dropping out of school due to indiscipline issues. Others were dropping out due to drug abuse, early marriages and pregnancies. This finding is similar to that of (Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo, 2014). However, the studies of (Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo, 2014), found that girls' early pregnancies and early marriages contributed to girls' failure to be at par with boys in attaining secondary education in Kenya. This study strived to know how students got involved in the implementation of fees abolition so that the objective of increasing access to secondary education to all should be achieved.

The studies of Adan and Orodho (2015) simply stated that the implementation of free secondary education policy was challenged by some students' drop out and indiscipline, but did not state clearly what initiative the head teachers, as education key stakeholders, took to reduce the drop out or indiscipline cases in an effort to ensure that learners remain in school and benefit from the policy. Hence, this study strived to find out how head teachers, PTA members, EDM, and parents

of the schools where my study was carried out, were doing to ensure that drop out due to other factors like indiscipline and early pregnancies are reduced so that all learners enrolled in school benefit from the school fees abolition.

2.8.2.3 Parents' Misunderstanding of the Details of the Policy

Parents' lack of understanding of the free secondary education policy was found to be a challenge as parents implemented free secondary education in Kericho County in Kenya (Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo, 2014). The findings of Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014), on impact of free secondary education policy on gender equality in secondary school education in Kericho County in Kenya indicated that parents failed to implement free secondary education policy due to their lack of knowledge regarding the policy. In some cases, parents were refusing to make other necessary contributions towards their children's education claiming that free secondary education means no any financial contribution to school. As a result, schools had to send such children home, thereby making them miss classes. The greatest victim was a girl child because some parents resorted to pay such expenses for their boy child. The findings of (Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo, (2014), on parents' misconception about free secondary education is also consistent with that of Goda (2018) in Tanzania where some parents were reluctant to make any monetary contribution towards their child's secondary education thinking that free secondary education was free in everything. In that case, instead of enjoying learning, absenteeism continued since such children had to be sent home to collect the said contributions while their fellow students continued to learn. However, both findings of Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014) and Goda (2018) are silent on how the governments of Kenya and Tanzania respectively, engaged with parents at policy formation stage to furnish them with details of their free secondary education policies. Early engagement between key stakeholders is vital in sharing information, regarding the policy, between policy makers and implementers (Masango, 2001). The studies Cherotich,

Simatwa and Ayodo (2014) and Goda (2018) did not indicate that there was proper sharing of information of policy between government and parents and hence, parents did not have enough knowledge regarding the policy. Hence, this study strived to find out how the government of Malawi engaged parents, PTA members, head teachers and the Education Division Manager before policy formulation to furnish them with details of the fees abolition in public secondary schools.

From the reviewed literature, it is evident that in countries where there were good communication and engagement between the governments, schools head teachers and parents, the implementation of free secondary education was done successfully. Therefore, great success was registered in terms increased access to secondary education for the poor. In situations where there was misinformation regarding the policy, stakeholders misunderstood the policy and challenges accompanied the policy implementation. For instance, parents' failure to make any financial contributions to schools for their children. Hence, such children were not allowed to attend classes and they dropped out. In addition, lack of engagement between the government and school administrators before the policy formation led poor planning and implementation such as overlooking the need for adequate financial and resource allocation to schools. The contributions of school administrators were not taken into consideration. Therefore, the free secondary education policy suffered lack of adequate classrooms and enough teachers, among others. Therefore, early engagement among all education stakeholders, in introducing free secondary education policy, is vital for successful policy implementation and the policies' objective attainment.

2.9 Mechanisms Devised to Cushion Challenges Stakeholders Encountered when Participating in the Implementation of Free Education Policies

2.9.1 Disbursement of Capitation Funds to Schools

According to the findings of Majumba (2019) on exploring challenges school administrators face while ensuring effective implementation of fee-free education provision in Bahi district in Tanzania, in an effort to cushion financial challenges that schools started to suffer due to removal of the school fees, the government introduced the disbursement of capitation funds to secondary schools to purchase teaching and learning materials and other necessities at school. However, the studies of Goda (2018), reveal that funds allocated to schools by government did not meet the school requirements because the allocation of the funds was based on previous year enrolment instead of the current year. Hence, it was inadequate to cater for all students. In addition, funds were released late thereby causing delays in performance of daily activities of the school. The study of Majumba (2019) has indicated that to cushion financial constraints which arose from the removal of the said fees, government started disbursing capitation fund to schools. This study labored to find out if Malawi government has increased funding to schools so that the removed fees should not make head teachers fail to implement school fees abolition amid economic challenges in schools.

2.9.2 Effective Information Dissemination Regarding the Policy to all Stakeholders

According to Goda (2018), parents and community members in Singida Municipality in Tanzania were later civic-educated and they started to get involved in development projects at schools like building classrooms and teachers' houses. These findings are similar to that of Njunwa (2010), on community participation as a tool for development who found that in Morogoro municipality, parents and community members started giving money or material contribution towards the school

projects. The schools' heads had to first call for meeting with parents and community members explaining the details of free secondary education policy and how it had led to overcrowded classes and shortage of teachers. In that way, the community members realised the need of participation in development projects at the schools. The above findings are similar to that done by Akobour (2015) on community participation in school infrastructure development, who found that in Ghana, parents' and local community participation in school development projects, increased the number of education infrastructures and managed to reduce the problem of overcrowded classrooms. This study strived to find out how the government disseminated information about fees abolition to all key stakeholders so that they become aware of their roles on how to carry out their roles in the implementation of the fees abolition.

2.9.3 Merging of Classes

According to Goda (2018), head teachers faced the challenge of inadequate classrooms as they implemented the free secondary policy, in Tanzania, because enrolment rose sharply. Therefore, head teachers permitted the merging of classes. However, the merging created another problem of congested classes. Similarly, the study of Epri (2016) on impact of large classes on student learning showed that large classes caused hindrance in teaching and learning process because in large classes, teachers failed to assist many students on individual basis within lesson period.

2.9.4 Intensifying Remedial Classes

Another strategy which school head teachers took to counter the challenge of overcrowded classes, as they participated in the implementation of free secondary education policy, was introduction of remedial classes (Goda, 2018). The finding of Goda (2018) reveals that due to overcrowded classes, some school head teachers started to intensify the use of remedial classes for students who did not understand in the normal lessons. This finding is similar to that of Epri, (2016) but laments

that remedial lessons brought another problem of overburdening teachers with big teaching workload, which led to demotivation among teachers.

Literature from the countries which started implementing free secondary education before Malawi, is silent on how the government, and other key stakeholders like school head teachers, PTAs, parents and learners engaged one another before introducing their free secondary education policies. There had been false information, especially among parents, regarding the free secondary policy. According to Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011) engagement can happen at any stage of a policy process. However, if it is done, among all stakeholders before a policy is made, correct information is shared. Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011) argue that stakeholders must be given enough time for exchange of ideas prior to rolling out a policy. If there was good engagement among all stakeholders, in the countries which introduced free secondary education policy, relevant information could be shared regarding the policies. Therefore, some key stakeholders could not be refusing to make financial contributions to schools. Early engagement could clear misunderstanding which some stakeholders had regarding the abolished school fees due to introduction of free secondary education policy and other financial contributions to secondary schools.

In addition, the reviewed literature has indicated that lack of early engagement among all stakeholders resulted in making head teachers start participating in the implementation of free secondary education policies before proper planning and budgeting for finances and resources needed. As such, stakeholders faced challenges when implementing the policies which included inadequate teaching and learning resources, classrooms and teachers due to the risen enrolment. Early Stakeholders' engagement could help stakeholders foresee the likely challenges they could face in the implementation of the policy and plan how to deal with them accordingly. This study,

therefore, strived to find out how the government of Malawi, the EDM, school head teachers, parents, students and PTA members engaged one another to plan and budget in advance for the finances and resources needed to implement the fees abolition.

Furthermore, related literature reviewed, indicates that the governments which introduced free secondary education policy made some special fund allocation to secondary schools to support the implementation of the policy. In addition, related literature has shown that except in Ghana, schools in the rest of the countries lamented inadequacy of funds to cater for the increased enrolment. This study, therefore, was keen to find out if Malawi made special fund following fees abolition and the possible challenges which head teachers face if there is no such a special fund or increase in the budget to schools. The study also strived to find out what head teachers are doing to counter such challenges.

The related literature has also indicated that in countries where free secondary education policy was introduced, there was a success story of an increase in access to secondary education for children from poor families. This study was keen to find out if the fee abolition in Malawi has any success including increase in access to secondary education for children from poor families.

Furthermore, related literature is silent on what head teachers and other education stakeholders did to reduce other causes of drop out like early pregnancies or marriages and indiscipline of students. These factors also caused drop-out and absenteeism among students significantly. Hence, this study strived to find out from head teachers, the Education Manager, the PTA members and parents what measures they have put in place to reduce or prevent drop-out due to other factors apart from failure to pay school fees.

The related literature is from different countries. While, in some countries, stakeholders participated in the policy implementation after good prior engagement with one another, in other countries stakeholders did not have good engagement. For countries whose stakeholders had good consultation and engagement, their participation in the policy formation and implementation registered successes. On the contrary, in countries where stakeholders did not have good engagement, their implementation faced many challenges including inability to increase access to secondary education for the poor. The countries had their justification for introducing the policies. For instance, enhancing high enrolment for both boys and girls, and ensuring equal access to secondary education for children from both poor and rich family backgrounds, were reasons for the policy in countries like Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Generally, a high school enrolment was realised as benefit in these countries.

Malawi is a different country. Therefore, it was imperative to conduct a study in Malawi and analyse the implementation school fees abolition in all public secondary, by key stakeholders, in order to fill these knowledge gaps in literature.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework which guided this study is the top-down policy implementation models by Sabatier (1986). According to Sabatier (1986), in top-down policy implementation models, the authority gives directions, designs and goals of a policy for grassroots stakeholders to simply implement without engaging them at the formulation stage. In most cases, the design or the crafting of the policy takes into consideration the desires and goals and implementation methodology set by policy makers and not the affected.

The model is generally criticised by its engineering way approach of solving problems (Rittel and Webbers, 1973). That is, authorities at the top may not know the problems of the people in their

context but they simply make a general way of solving them without considering the context in which the problems occur. In that way, some factors may not be considered to help solve the actual problem at hand. For Head and Alford, (2013), modern society should be seen as pluralistic rather than homogeneous and not amenable to top-down general solutions. Head and Alford (2013) further argue that social groups increasingly exhibit important differences in aspirations, values and perspectives that should be considered in coming up with methodology to solve a problem. Hence, solutions method should not only come from the top policy makers as in top-down implementation models.

The failure of the policy under top-down implementation is attributed to ambiguity of goals and means of implementation (Hupe, 2011). The goals and methods are in most cases not clear such that implementation is very difficult to be done. Consequently, evaluation is difficult to be done.

Hupe (2011) suggests that policy makers should engage the implementers and the affected people in their context at first to know their choices and priorities before the implementation to register success. Furthermore, the goals and methods of implementing the policy were supposed to be clear for policy implementation to be successful (Hupe, 2011).

This theoretical framework will be used to analyze the implementation of school fees abolition policy reform whose results may have been affected by its formulation which did not include views of key stakeholders.

2.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented related literature to the study. The findings in the literature review have indicated that in countries where stakeholders were not well engaged, their implementation faced many challenges. For instance, in countries like Tanzania and Kenya, there was lack of understanding regarding the policy by some education stakeholders like parents and guardians who

thought that free secondary education meant the schools would not require them to make any financial contributions towards various development activities and other programmes taking place at school. As such, they felt cheated when asked to pay other forms of fees and make payments for school development projects. Other parents had to withdraw their children from schools. As such, school drop-out remained and secondary school completion rate did not increase greatly. The lack of understanding came due to lack of early engagement between government and parents before the commencement of the policies. This study was geared to find out the how Malawi government engaged parents, students, PTA members and head teachers before rolling out the school fees abolition.

Lack of engagement between the government and school head teachers in developing free secondary education policies resulted in lack of adequate teachers, teaching and learning resources and enough classrooms for the increased enrolment. The views of head teachers who could raise the issue of considering increasing classrooms and fund allocation for teaching and learning resources, prior to introducing free secondary education policy, were not accommodated. Except for Ghana, countries whose studies I have reviewed, adopted free secondary education policy before thorough preparedness. As such, the goodness of increased school enrolment turned to be problem in terms of inadequate teaching and learning materials, classrooms and teachers. As for Ghana, the free senior high school policy helped reduce financial burdens borne by parents on their children's education. As such school drop-out due to parents' failure to pay various forms of fees was greatly reduced. Therefore, most students were able to complete their secondary education. This study wanted to find out if Malawi's school fee abolition engaged parents and head teachers before rolling it out, in order to get their views.

This study also strived to find out the successes and challenges registered as education key stakeholders are made to participate only at implementation stage and not at formation stage and that some fees were removed without replacement.

Finally, the chapter has shown the knowledge gaps in the related literature I reviewed and how I planned to fill them through the data I had to collect. The next chapter will discuss design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents research approach, research paradigm, researched designs, population of interest, setting, limitation of the study, delimitation of the study, sampling strategy, instrumentation, data analysis, piloting of the study and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The study used interpretivist or constructivist research paradigm. The researcher used interpretivist paradigm because according to this paradigm, knowledge is constructed from what is experienced by the researcher on subjects in their natural setting and not just independently (Punch, 2005). Furthermore, the researcher was prompted to use interpretivist paradigm going by the understanding of Morgan (2007) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), that the acceptance of the context

is vital for knowledge and knowing and that there is a need to understand the individual rather than universal laws. There could be some standing generalisations regarding the nature of participation of stakeholders in implementation of free secondary education policies. The researcher could not rely on such generalisations. The researcher needed to go and carry out the study in the selected schools and see for himself how parents, students, PTA members, head teachers and the EDM were implementing the fees abolition in the selected schools. In this study, the knowledge the researcher wanted to obtain on education stakeholders' participation in the abolition of school fees, came from what was got through talking with the participants themselves in their places and not otherwise. The knowledge that was gotten depended on what participants expressed by themselves according to how they assess the implementation of the secondary school fees abolition. The researcher had to, personally, go out to the field without any predetermined knowledge or answers. However, through interaction with the participants, the needed information emerged. This was also in line with Creswell (2014) who argues that in constructivist research paradigm, knowledge is obtained through the researcher's interaction with participants without predetermined information so that the researcher simply confirms or compares.

Similarly, Crotty (1998) argues that in constructivist paradigm, basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. The process is largely inductive where the inquirer generates meaning from data collected in the field (Crotty (1998). Therefore, the study justifiably used interpretivist as a research paradigm.

3.3 Research Approach

This study employed qualitative research approach. The choice was arrived at because the researcher wanted to go personally to analyze grassroots education key stakeholders were implementing the school fee abolition in their specific schools and divisions. According to

Creswell (2014), to collect data in qualitative research, one has to go to the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. Creswell (2014) further argues that the researcher does not bring participants to the laboratory, neither does he typically send out instruments for individuals to complete or fill in. Instead, the researcher gathers information by talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their environment.

In addition, the researcher wanted to get much information from key education stakeholders on what they regard as successes and challenges as they implement the fees abolition. Issues like successes and challenges cannot be quantified as in quantitative approaches (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This is also in line with (Creswell, 2014) who argues that in qualitative approaches, the researcher normally aims at getting detailed information from participants on a particular subject. Since the researcher had to probe for detailed information regarding participation of key stakeholders, at grassroots, in the implementation of Malawi's school fee abolition, qualitative research approach fits this study.

3.4 Research Design

A research design is the procedure for collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies according to the research question it aims to answer (Grey, 2014). This study used a case study qualitative research design because the researcher wanted to obtain information on which much has not yet been discovered by other researchers. Yin (2003) defines a case study as an inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Precisely, this study used exploratory research design. The researcher went out to explore how education grassroots stakeholders were implementing the school fees abolition in Malawi. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), qualitative exploratory research design focusses on collecting either secondary or

primary data using unstructured format or informal procedure. Creswell and Clark (2007) further argues that the aim of qualitative exploratory research design is not to provide final or conclusive intervention to the problem at hand. Rather, it sets out to explore the topic with varying level of depth.

Adding on to the above, Brown (2006) argues that qualitative exploratory research design is suitable where there are new research problems on which little or no previous research has been done. This study was new in Malawi such that very little information was known to the general public. There might also be some misinformation regarding the school fees abolition in public secondary schools. Moreover, the aim of this study was not to give solutions or interventions to whatever findings obtained. Rather, the researcher simply had to collect, analyse and report the findings on the implementation of the policy reform. Therefore, using case study qualitative exploratory research design was the best choice.

3.5 Sampling Strategy, Setting and Population of Interest

The study employed purposive sampling. According to (Creswell, 2009), purposive sampling is used when the researcher wants specific information that can only be obtained using specific participants. The site chosen should provide all information needed in the study (Punch, 2009), (Creswell, 2009).

In this study, the researcher's site of interest was Shire Highlands Education Division education division schools. The researcher targeted two schools, a boarding and a Community Day Secondary School in the division because secondary schools in Malawi can generally be categorised into boarding and day secondary schools. Shire Highlands Education Division has these categories of schools. Hence, the researcher purposively chose to conduct the study in this

division. In addition, Shire Highlands Education Division has both poor and rich parents. The division has schools with head teachers, Parents Teachers Association members, students and parents who would provide their independent views, explanations and experiences, regarding the implementation of fee abolition, in their specific schools. The researcher wanted to know how the grassroots key stakeholders were implementing the school fee abolition in boarding schools where boarding fee is larger than tuition or text book fund; and at Community Day Secondary Schools where there are no boarding fees.

Although there are many secondary schools in the country and in the division, the researcher's sampling being purposive, the number of schools chosen did not make a statistical representation of schools at either national or divisional level. However, the chosen schools provided all information needed for the study. In this way, the sampling is conforming to the tenets of a purposive sampling in a qualitative study. Nevertheless, the information obtained from the two schools, in the division may, in some way, be similar to that in some schools in other divisions, of the same categories, in the country.

The researcher featured twenty seven participants in this study. The study is qualitative and the sampling is purposive. Hence, the number of participants did not make a statistical representation of the all education key stakeholders at either national or divisional level.

The researcher featured Shire Highlands Education Division Manager for Shire Highlands Education Division. The Education Division Manager was featured in this study because she oversees all schools in the division. No secondary education policy or decision can be implemented in the division without her knowledge. The ministry of education passes information to secondary school head teachers through her. Being overseer of the division, she must have been receiving

feedback on the implementation of the school fee abolition from secondary schools in the division. Therefore, she was expected to provide relevant and accurate data for this study.

The researcher interviewed two head teachers. Head teachers were purposively chosen in such a way that any head teacher for a boarding school and one for a Community Day Secondary School was featured. Secondary school head teachers were chosen because they know whether parents had problems or not in paying the removed fees and how the removal of the said fees has changed the situation of such parents. School head teachers also know financial situation in the running schools after the said fees have been removed. They are also mandated to take an action on students who do not pay fees by sending them home to collect the fees. Hence, school head teachers are good assessors of the fees payment and fee abolition for both the schools and parents.

Eight parents were featured in this study, four parents from each school. The parents were purposively selected in such a way that any parent who had a child in the featured school was selected. In addition, the selection of parents was in such a way that all sexes were accommodated and that one of the parents, in each school, was a person who had experience of both fees paying and the fees abolition. Parents were chosen because they are the ones who pay fees for their children or relatives. They feel painful when they see their ward being chased from school on grounds of failure to pay fees. In so doing, parents were considered to be able to assess if the fee abolition is easing their financial burdens on their children's education.

The researcher also featured eight members of the Parents' and Teachers' Association: four members from each school. These were also purposively selected in such a way that both sexes were represented. The PTA members were chosen because they are involved in deciding fees adjustments and introducing monetary contributions towards development projects in the school.

Therefore, they were expected to have say on the implementation of fee abolition in secondary schools.

Eight students were featured in this study. Students were purposively selected in such a way that every form had a representative. In addition, the selection deliberately made sure that both sexes must have equal representation in the focus groups. That is, the selected students comprised two boys and two girls. Four students from one school and four students from the other school formed focus groups for students. Students were featured because they are the ones who benefit from the removed fees. Some students could have been paying the removed fees by themselves. They are the ones who feel painful when sent home on grounds of not paying fees. They were included because they stand a good position to give testimony as to whether the removal of the fees is a good thing. Including students helped the researcher know how they are taking part in supporting the fees abolition or defeating it. They are beneficiaries of the fees abolition. Students must be good at assessing if the fee abolition is being implemented in the best way.

Each member of the groups mentioned above has a role in the implementation of the fees abolition. Their roles include ensuring that students are not dropping out of school and getting involved in development activities of the school. These are the specific people who have the information that I needed in the study. Therefore, the researcher chose these groups of people purposively so that the information needed should be obtained.

3.6. Limitations of the Study

The study anticipated some resistance on the part of students who might think that by participating in the interviews they would be wasting their valuable time for their studies. The interviews could collide with their preparation time for continuous assessment or end of term examinations. To counter this problem, I did not impose the day or time to interview them. Rather, I, in liaison with

their head teacher, gave them an opportunity to suggest the best day and time that they would be free so that their studies would not be affected.

The study also anticipated that parents, PTA members, head teachers and the EDM could not like to participate in the study on grounds of not having enough time for the exercise. To counter this, I gave them a chance to choose day and time, they thought they would be free, to participate in the exercise.

The study also anticipated some fears from some participants who could think that the information I was trying to get from them had political motive in favour of or against the current or previous government. To deal with this, I first of all, introduced myself to the participants, stating that I am a civil servant, secondary school teacher and master of education student. I also showed my letter of introduction from the college and approval letter from the Education Division Manager and the head teachers on the same issue. I also assured them that being a civil servant, who respects Malawi constitution, I was not allowed to practice politics or behave in a political manner that can compromise my service. Doing so, could make me liable to a crime. My letter of introduction from the college helped in testifying that the information which I wanted to get would assist only in fulfilling education master's research requirements.

3.7 Delimitations of the Study

The researcher featured non-political figure only. These people were expected to give their views independent of their political affiliations. As such, the views that they gave were honest and not tainted with political notions. Non- political figures do not fear to state the truth of matters on the ground as they may not always wish to be associated with success and supremacy only, which politicians crave for. The study aimed at getting what is true regarding participation of stakeholders

in the implementation of school fees abolition. Therefore, selecting non-political figures was the best choice.

The study confined itself to Shire Highlands Education Division and featured two schools, a boarding and community day secondary school, because this is a geographical area under the researcher's choice and not any other place. The information from other education divisions and schools could as well be important but the researcher purposively wanted to get the information from this area to achieve the objective of the study.

3.8 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of the Study

According to Hulley et al (2007) establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants is a required standard practice when designing research protocols. Inclusion criteria are the key features of target population that the investigators will use to answer their research question. Some inclusion criteria include demographic, clinical and geographic characteristics. In contrast, exclusion criteria are features of potential study participants who meet the inclusion criteria but present with additional characteristics that could interfere with success of the study or increase their risk for an unfavourable outcome (Hulley et al 2007). According to (Hulley et al 2007), some common exclusion criteria include characteristics of eligible individuals that make them highly likely to be lost to follow-up, miss scheduled appointments to collect data, have comorbidities that could bias the results of the study, provide inaccurate data and increase risk of for an unfavourable outcome.

In this study, parents were chosen because they are the ones who fetch fees for their children.

Students were chosen because they are direct beneficiaries of the fees abolition. They are the ones who are sent home for failure to pay the fees while their fellow students who have paid are learning.

Head teachers were chosen because they collect fees from students or parents. They are also mandated to chase students who do not pay fees. They are the ones who feel stranded when the students do not pay fees to run activities of the school.

Parents and Teachers Association members were chosen because among their roles they ensure that students get education and provide link between the teachers and teachers for the smooth running of school activities.

Shire Highlands Education Division Manager was among my interviewees since she is key education stakeholder overseeing all secondary schools in the division. No secondary education policy or decision can be implemented in the division without her knowledge. The ministry of education passes information to secondary school head teachers through her. She must have been receiving feedback on the fees abolition in schools under the division she is overseeing. Therefore, she was expected to provide relevant and accurate data for this study.

This study did not include political leaders like the Minister of education even though they are education stakeholders involved in formation of education policies. The fear was that political leaders might not provide accurate information. They might have felt that the study would expose the government's weakness in some aspects. Hence, they would provide any data that would only indicate that the implementation of fee abolition is thriving well even if the reality might be the opposite.

3.9 Study Period

The researcher carried out data collection from September to October because schools were open such that the EDM and head teachers were not on holiday. The students too were, during this period, in schools. Hence, all informants were available.

3.10 Instrumentation (Data Collection Instruments)

This study used semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis.

3.10.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Gillham (2000), semi-structured interviews are much more flexible version of the structured interview in real-world research. In a semi-structured interview, interviewers have a general idea of where the interview should go and what should come out of it, however interviewees' responses determine the flow of the conversation (Nunan, 1992). According to Bryman (2004), in semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares an interview guide so that he or she should not lose track or omit very important questions. According to Byrne (2004), during the conversation, in-depth information is obtained because of the inclusion of open-ended questions and probing for clarification on some responses, whenever necessary. Sometimes, the deep and relevant information, other than expected from the prepared questions, come out since the interviewee is given an opportunity to express himself or herself freely (Byrne, 2004).

For this study, the researcher prepared interview guide in which guiding questions were written. The semi-structured interviews were administered to the Education Division Manager and two secondary school head teachers. In the study, the researcher first elaborated central ideas behind the interview and started asking questions and let respondents give answers. Subsequent questions were asked depending on the preceding responses given. This implies that respondents shaped the direction of the conversation as deeper information also came out. Therefore, conversation was motivating to the respondents since they were the ones directing the flow of the talk. Therefore, using semi-structured interviews was the best choice.

3.10.1.1 Strengths of Semi-structured interviews

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), semi-structured interviews usually result in in-depth conversation which provides rich information. On this, Ritchie and Louis (2003) argue that

researcher can probe for further information from various responses. In addition, the researcher can tactfully make meaning of both verbal and non-verbal responses like hunches, laughter and silence of the respondents to reveal information which could be hidden.

In addition, in semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions bring about the atmosphere of flexibility on part of the respondents hence, diverse and rich information come out easily (Kalilla 2021). According to Kalilla (2021), since open-ended questions make the respondents free to speak, a diverse information is brought out, making the study rich with information.

3.10.1.2 Weaknesses of Semi-Structured Interviews

One weakness of semi-structured interviews is that they are time consuming because of the opportunities given to respondents to explain their responses and that other issues just emerge from some responses (Fox, 2009). To overcome such issues, the researcher was observing time regularly so that he could know when he should go to the next question. The researcher also made sure that only very important questions were being asked so that much time should not be spent in every small issue of the conversation.

Another weakness of semi-structured interviews is that during the conversation, the researcher is very close to respondents since he collects data by himself in respondents' natural environment (Newman and Tufford, 2010). As such, there is likelihood of influencing informants' responses. To avoid this, in line with Fox (2009), during the study, the researcher maintained a neutral manner in the way he was relating to the respondents such that the researcher was deliberately avoiding influencing them on how exactly they should respond to the questions.

In addition, in line with Drew (2004), the researcher avoided showing his feeling of amazement due to various responses of the informants so that respondents could not be scared. The researcher avoided persuading respondents shrewdly to change their responses to the questions asked.

Another challenge of conducting semi-structured interviews is that they demand interviewer's sophistication in that they should be able to regulate the flow of the conversation so that relevant questions are not left out. The interviewer must also make sure that the conversation is well recorded and notes are taken (Adams (2005). To ensure all these, the researcher made sure that the voice recorder was available and he was checking the guiding questions regularly so that he should capture all relevant information needed.

According to Small (2008), another challenge of semi-structured interview is poor or limited responses which kills conversation. Small (2008) argues that poor or limited responses is caused by the fact that the interviewer does not understand the language used in the conversation. In such a situation, the conversation becomes dull and hence the interviewer cannot get meaning from it. This sometimes prompts the interviewer to indicate guess work in the analysis of the conversation (Barriball and While, 1994). To prepare to overcome such challenges, the researcher had to first find out the language the prospective informants could comfortably understand. It happened that some could understand Chichewa while others both Chichewa and English. Therefore, the data collecting instruments were in these respective languages so that the respondents could understand the questions and respond accordingly.

According to Fox (2009), semi-structured interviews are time consuming, therefore only two semi-structured interviews were administered. The choice of semi-structured interviews was made because according to Patton, (2002), this instrument helps the interviewer to have just guiding questions while at the same time giving chance for any direction of conversation with the participant, depending on the response given.

3.10.2 Focus Group Discussion

According to Barrows (2000), a focus group discussion is a group interview where a small group of individuals are gathered for the purpose of discussing one or more topics of interest. According to Krueger (1994), a focus group should comprise a minimum of three and maximum of twelve participants.

In this study, the researcher conducted two focus groups discussions with PTA members, one focus group for each school. Each focus group comprised four people. Both sexes were represented in these groups. Hence, there were eight people in these focus groups.

The researcher also conducted two focus group discussions with learners, one focus group for each school. Each focus group comprised four learners. Each form was represented by a learner. Hence, there were eight students.

Lastly, the researcher conducted two focus group discussions with parents, one focus group in one school and one focus group in the other school. Each focus group comprised four parents in which both sexes were represented. Hence, there was a total of eight parents for these focus groups.

Every focus group comprised at least three people so as to obey Krueger (1994)'s range of numbers of participants in focus groups. As noted by Bryman (2008), the focus group discussions also assisted in saving time by interviewing several people, of similar attributes, at the same time than each of them separately.

3.10.2.1 Weaknesses of Focus Group Discussions

Gundumogula (2020) argues that focus group discussions have a potential of bias in that some few participants may dominate the discussions. As such ideas obtained may not necessarily reflect the whole group's contribution. To counter such a challenge, the researcher was checking every

participant's involvement in the discussion and encouraged everyone to speak on the issue being discussed.

Another challenge of focus group discussion is that sometimes it is difficult to analyse data as it is being collected because the researcher is confronted with several tasks at the same time like observing the respondents, taking notes and advising participants to be active in the conversations (Gundumogula, 2020). To counter such a challenge, the researcher, in advance, placed a voice a recorder at the centre of the group. This assisted in complimenting the notes the researcher was taking. As such data collection process was eased.

3.10.3 Document Analysis

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure of reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic. Like other methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop knowledge. Corbin and Strauss (2008) argues that documents may take a variety of forms which include agenda, minutes of meetings, books, letters, journals newspapers, diaries, press releases and institution files.

In addition, Bowen (2009), argues that document analysis may be used as a stand-alone method of research or as a complement to other research methods of collecting and analyzing data in qualitative research.

This study used the speech of the Minister of education as quoted in The Nation on Sunday, 8 November, 2020, newspaper which quoted his whole speech verbatim when announcing the introduction of secondary school fees abolition. The speech was comprehensive, giving details of this great policy change. NESIP 2020-2030 was also used. Some parts of Malawi Secondary

Education Expansion for Development (SEED) and The 2018/2019 Education Sector Performance Report of the Ministry of Education (2019) were also used to get information.

Access to the letter to education divisions, delaying or stopping head teachers from collecting the said fees, was not successful as relevant authorities said they could not find the document in their circulation files. All head teachers in secondary schools and community day secondary schools the researcher asked for the letter in Shire highlands Education Division, South East Education Division and Central West Education Division said they simply received a WhatsApp message, from their respective Education Division Offices, telling them to delay collecting fees from students. That is, they were not served with official letter to be kept in their circulation files.

3.10.3.1 Advantages of Document Analysis

One advantage of document analysis is that it is an efficient method in that it is less time consuming since the researcher simply selects data he or she wants from the document (Bowen, 2009).

The second advantage of document analysis is that one can obtain it without the author's permission (Bowen, 2009). For instance, researchers can access newspapers without the author's permission. In that way, researchers access the document easily.

In addition, documents are less costly as compared to other methods of obtaining data (Bowen, 2009). For instance, some documents can simply be downloaded if they are published or online. As such the researcher does not need to spend much money to travel to get the data.

Furthermore, documents are stable and are not reactive (Merriam, 1988). Hence, researcher's presence cannot alter what is being studied. On stability, documents are suitable for repeated reviews (Merriam, 1988).

Another advantage of documents is that they present exact names, references and details of events (Yin, 1994). The exactness of names, references and details obviously add credibility to authenticity of data.

3.10.3.2 Limitations of Document Analysis

According to (Bowen, 2009) some documents tend to provide insufficient detail. (Bowen, 2009) finds that documents are produced for some purposes other than research studies. They are created independent of research agenda. The documents may not indicate the results in studies that took place previously. As such they do not provide sufficient information to answer the research question. To deal with this challenge the researcher compared information in the document to that obtained using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in making necessary clarifications.

Another challenge is that sometimes documents may be deliberately blocked by some other authorities (Yin, 1994). In this way, the researcher can be denied some information needed for his or her studies.

3.11 Data Management Methods and Ethical Consideration

According to Schwandt (1997), in qualitative research, data management refers to designed structure for systematizing, categorizing and filing the materials to make them efficiently retrievable and duplicable. Proper data management allows researchers to accumulate information in various forms or locations for different research purposes, while maintaining security of the data (Parry and Mauthner, 2004)

According to Li-Chen Lin (2009), topics in qualitative data management include but are not limited to confidentiality, human subjects' protection and data storage, sharing and ownership.

According to Pinch (2000), confidentiality is the responsibility of the researcher and his professional commitment to the study participants. Privacy of information gathered for each participant must be respected and maintained. Participants have right to privacy and control of information to avoid negative consequences, on them, after the study or interview (Hadjistarvropoulos and Symthe 2001).

According to Macrina (2005), to ensure human subjects' protection, participants must be protected from psychological harm. There should be no sharing of stories and data they share in interviews except with authorized persons. Data collected from participants should be stored securely so that they can be retrieved only when needed.

On data storage, to ensure security of data, in this study, data from participants was transcribed and kept securely in a notebook. The notebook was kept securely in special drawer. Audios for the responses of each respondent were kept securely in phone and laptop. A pin was used for both the phone and the laptop. Newspaper articles carrying policy on free secondary education were kept in phone and laptop during and after the study.

To ensure confidentiality and protection of human subjects, participants' names were used in the study. Instead, participants were identified by numbers like participant 1, participant 2 participant 3 and so on.

Similarly, names of schools were not mentioned in the study. Instead, numbers were used. For instance: School 1 and School 2.

On data sharing, in this study, data was not shared with anyone, except the responsible officers assessing the proposal and thesis.

3.12 Data Analysis

According to Rogdan and Biklen (1982), in qualitative research, data analysis is a process of systematically searching and arranging the information the researcher has gathered, be it in form of textual or non-textual materials, in order to increase the understanding of the phenomenon. The process of analyzing data predominantly involves coding and categorising data. Data analysis further involves making sense of information, followed by identifying significant patterns and finally drawing meaning from data, subsequently building a logical chain of evidence (Patton, 2002).

In line with Cresswell (2009), data with similar information was coded in order to facilitate the process of generating themes from which concepts were pulled out. The themes and subthemes were supported by quotations from respondents to act as evidence during discussion. The themes and subthemes were only the ones in line with the research questions for this study.

In line with (Patton, 2002), vigorous comparisons of responses from participants within and outside schools was done back and forth so that evidence and trustworthiness was established. Hence, responses to a particular question, from parents in a focus group for school A, were compared. Responses to a particular question from parents in focus group for school B were also compared. Furthermore, responses to a particular question, from parents in focus group for school A were compared to responses to the same question, from parents in focus group of school B.

In addition, responses to a particular question for Parents and Teachers Association members in focus group of school A were compared. Similarly, responses to a particular question from Parents and Teachers Association members in a focus group of school B were compared. And responses to a particular question for Parents and Teachers' Association members in a focus group of school

A were compared to responses to the same question from Parents and Teachers Association members of school B.

Responses to a particular question, from head teacher of school A, in a semi structured interview, were compared to responses to the same question, from the head teacher of school B in a semi structured interview.

Furthermore, responses from the EDM and those of respondents from school A and B and the speech of the minister of education were compared.

Finally, responses to a particular question from students in school A were compared to responses from students in school B.

Responses to a particular question, from different data sources, i.e. students, parents, PTA members, head teachers, EDM and minister's speech were compared to draw similarities and differences and hence conclusions.

In summary, data collected from one category of participants for a particular school was vigorously compared to data collected from participants of the same category in the other school.

Data from the two schools, in Malawi, was later during discussion, compared with data from participants in similar studies in other countries. By doing this, meaning was easily justified.

3.13 Research Dissemination Strategy

According to Schober, Farrington and Lacey (2006), the primary purpose of research project is to gather information about an issue or problem and construct a report or article to disseminate the findings. Findings must be disseminated so that information got from the study may benefit the public.

The findings of research can be disseminated at local, national or international levels so that different categories of the public may have access to the information from the research conducted (Schober, Farrington and Lacey (2006). Some means of information dissemination include but not limited to research dissertation presentation, departmental newsletters, seminars, conference papers, research article publication in journals.

The dissemination strategy for this research was through thesis defense, a copy of thesis at UNIMA library and online in a journal article.

3.14 Ethical Considerations (Risks and Strategies for Obviating them to Enhance Protection of Rights and Welfare of Study Participants)

In order to get information from the areas, institutions and individuals, the researcher obtained clearance letters from relevant authorities. Creswell (2013) emphasises that before getting into the field to collect data from participants, the researcher should obtain approval from their institutions. The institutions have to ensure that the researcher will respect the rights of informants and follow all ethical procedures in the data collection, analysis and reporting process (Creswell, 2013).

For this study, the researcher obtained letter of introduction from University of Malawi, to get access to Shire Highlands Education Division Manager. Another letter of introduction was obtained from the division office so that the researcher could have access to information from school head teachers and parents. The researcher further got letter of introduction from the school head teachers so that he could have access to Parents' and Teachers' Association members.

During the study, the researcher first requested for informed consent from participants to participate in the study. This was in line with Denzin and Lincoln, (2011) who argues that before the exercise, participants must be informed of what will be asked of them, how data obtained will be used and reported, so that they make decision to participate in the study. This also concurs with

Sarantakos, (2005) who argues that the researcher must disclose the purpose of the study to participants so that participants can assess if the purpose is not harmful to them. According to Sarantakos, (2005), some researchers reveal only good part of the purpose of the study and hide harmful part to participants so that they accept to participate in the exercise. This is described to be unethical. Hence, the researcher avoided it by telling the participants the actual purpose of the studies which was for the fulfillment of completion my thesis in master of education programme.

The researcher gave participants all freedom to participate in the exercise and that they may withdraw when necessary. Participants were also told to make reservations to questions they thought it was necessary to do so. This was in line with Conelly (2014), who argues that in research participants should be granted freedom to participate or withdraw from the exercise any time if they find necessary.

Participants were also assured that the information obtained from them will only be used for the purpose of academic fulfilment of the thesis and not otherwise. This was in line with Punch (2005) who stresses the need for protection of the data collected from participants from unintended user. According to Punch (2005) the issue of who owns the data after it has been collected is very critical in that some researchers or faculty owners think they own the data and use it anyhow. In that way the rights of the participants are violated. Therefore, use of the collected data for other purposes was avoided at all cost.

In addition, in line with Giordano, O'reilly, Taylor and Dogra, (2007) to ensure confidentiality of participants, names of schools, were recognised by alphabet letter while head teachers, parents, students and Parents and Teachers' Association members were recognised by letters of alphabet for their school and numbers and not by their real names so that they are anonymous to readers of this research. For instance, participant schools were named SA and SB, which means School A

and School B. The name of the Education Division Manager was not mentioned and instead was simply mentioned, EDM. The participant head teachers in their respective schools were named SAH and SBH which means head teacher for school A and head teacher for school B. Participant PTA members in their respective schools and focus groups were named as follows: SA/FGD/PTA1,PTA2,PTA3,PTA4; SB/FGD/PTA1,PTA2,PTA3,PTA4 which means PTA member 1,2,3,4 in focus group discussion from School A; PTA member 1,2,3,4 in focus group discussion from School B. Participant parents in their respective focus groups and schools were named as follows: SA/FGD/P1,P2,P3,P4 and SB/FGD/P1,P2,P3,P4 which means Parent 1,2,3,4 in a focus group discussion in School A, and Parent 1,2,3,4 in a focus group in school B. Participant students were named as follows: SA/FGD/S1,S2,S3,S4 and SB/FGD/S1,S2,S3,S4 which means student 1,2,3,4 in focus group discussion in school A and student 1,2,3,4 in focus group discussion in school B. Thus, the numbers represented chronological order of participants in their respective schools A or B. Finally , the participants' details were only known by researcher and identity of participants were not be known by other readers of the research. This is also in line with Giordano, O'reilly, Taylor and Dogra, (2007) who emphasise the need for issues of confidentiality and anonymity of participants' identities to other readers of the research study.

3.15 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure trustworthiness of the study, the researcher made use of data triangulation. According to Guion (2002), triangulation can be categorized into two: data triangulation and methodological triangulation. Guion (2002) argues that data triangulation involves the use of different sources of data or information. According to Guion (2002), data triangulation helps in ascertaining trustworthiness of the data because information regarding an issue being studied, is obtained from different data sources.

In this study, data from EDM, head teachers, parents, PTA members and minister's speech on how schools are implementing the fees abolition, was collected. Using these groups of participants, it was easy to compare their views and the truth about the implementation school fees abolition was known.

Secondly, trustworthiness of the study was achieved through methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative methods to study an issue or programme (Guion, 2002). According to Guion (2002), if conclusions from each of the methods are the same, then trustworthiness is established. On the same, Galadas (20017) argues that the use of different methods of collecting data is important because it ensures that the weakness of one method is compensated by the strength of the other method. In that way the data collected is trustworthy. In this study, the researcher used individual semi-structured interviews with head teachers and the Education Division Manager, focus group discussions with students, parents and members of Parents and Teachers Association and document analysis. Since common views happened to come out of the information collected using the variety of methods, then it was granted that the study was really trustworthy.

In this study, the researcher was very instrumental. According to Newman and Tufford (2010), a qualitative researcher cannot be away from his respondents as in quantitative studies where the researcher stands far from his informants. Since the study is qualitative, the researcher needed to be close to his respondents observing and clarifying questions where possible. According to Starks and Trinidad (2007), in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument for analysis across all phases of project. Therefore, if care is not taken it may bring about researcher's personal influence on the respondents' responses. Hence, in this study, the researcher made sure that he did not

influence the responses of respondents in any way. Respondents were given chance to explain and clarify their responses freely.

Furthermore, Creswell (2014) concurs that in qualitative research, researchers typically gather data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants. Researchers do not rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. Since the researcher was very close to the informants, one might accuse the researcher of creating bias so that he gets my predetermined responses. However, to counter such notions, the researcher made use of bracketing. According to Newman and Tufford (2010), bracketing is a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions of the researcher that may taint the research process. In this case, the researcher was continuously controlling his emotions and feelings so that they should not overcome him in the way he was conducting myself in relation to his informants during the studies. This was in line with the suggestions of Drew (2004) who argues that researcher must possess ability of self-discovery, to prevent him from becoming too emotional in the process of collecting some kinds of data to avoid bias. Drew (2004) further argues that such emotions distort the exactness of the data and hence, the researcher's opinions and preferences only are collected.

Furthermore, Newman and Tufford (2010) argue that some researcher bias comes from the researcher's past experiences. According to Newman and Tufford (2010), the researcher associates his present data and participants with ones he encountered in his past experiences. If the researcher reacts abnormally, it is likely that he repeats in the present time. This may also come due to researcher's failure to control his or her emotions (Drew, 2004). To control this, the researcher must learn to control his or her internal emotions from distorting the reality of the data being

collected (Drew, 2004). Therefore, during data collection, the researcher controlled his emotions, in relation to his past experience so that they could not distort his data collection and analysis.

Another way of ensuring trustworthiness of the study is that the data should reach saturation. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is reached when enough information has been collected, no new themes are needed and that replication of the study can be done to obtain additional information from data collected. According to Bowen, (2008), failure to reach data saturation hampers trustworthiness of the study. Although different means of ensuring data saturation depend on type of research design, there are some general means of attaining it (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). According Bernard (2012), interviews brings about data saturation because the researcher has an opportunity to ask various types of questions to gather rich information. However, Bernard (2012), advises that the researcher should involve a variety of participants in the interviews including those whom someone would not consider. In line with this, to ensure data saturation the researcher used both individual interviews and focus group discussions. Adults were expected to be comfortable to give information when interviewed individually. Therefore, the Education Division Manager and school head teachers were interviewed in separate semi-structured interviews. Students were interviewed in their separate focus groups. As such, rich and reliable information was obtained for the study.

The researcher knew that he had reached data saturation because he was obtaining similar information, on particular research questions, across the different groups of respondents i.e. the Education Division Manager, head teachers, learners, parents and PTA members. In addition, the different data collecting instruments i.e. semi structured: interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis brought forth similar information.

3.16 Foreseeable and Unforeseeable Adverse Events

Some participants could take this study as their opportunity to express their political opinion and agenda on the policy reform. To avoid this, the researcher, in advance, instructed the participants never to attach political notions to this study as it is purely academic.

The study could not be liked by some PTA members, head teachers, students or parents. They could complain of not having enough time to participate in the exercise. To mitigate this, the researcher gave participants a chance to propose the day and time for the exercise.

Furthermore, the time for the exercise could cause boredom or hunger. To counter this, the researcher gave every participant a snack and soft drink during the exercise.

Another problem was long distances that some participants were travelling to get to the agreed place. In that case, the researcher promised and fulfilled to reimburse the transport money so that participants were relieved of that expense.

Some participants could give responses on which, after some days, the researcher could need get them to make some clarifications. In that case, the researcher planned to visit such participants even at their homes. For some participants who had phones, the researcher got their phone numbers so that he could call them for a meeting to discuss the issue.

3.17 Piloting of the Study

According to Arnold et al (2009), pilot study is the first step of the entire research protocol and is often a smaller-sized study. According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001), piloting is the process whereby a researcher tries out the research techniques and methods they have in mind to see how well they work in practice and, if necessary, modify their plans accordingly. Pilot study can be used to pre-test particular research instruments (Baker, 1994,). In addition, De Vaus (1993), argues that to avoid taking risk, the researcher should conduct a pilot study which may give them advance

warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated to help in collecting data.

Before main data collection, the researcher conducted pilot study using semi-structured interview with one head teacher, one focus group discussions with three PTA members, one focus group discussions with three parents and one focus group discussions with three students at a certain Community Day Secondary School in the same Shire Highlands Education Division other than the schools he conducted the main study.

The pilot study helped the researcher know in advance if the interviews and focus group discussion questions he had planned to ask would make respondents give relevant information as outlined in the research questions.

The success registered in the pilot study gave researcher assurance of trustworthiness of the data collecting instruments prepared. This also assured the researcher of getting trustworthy results from the data which was to be collected in the main study.

When the researcher found some questions too complicated, vague or redundant in the pilot study, he had to rephrase or remove them.

3.18 Chapter Summary

The chapter has discussed research approach, research designs, research paradigm, limitation of the study, delimitation of the study, setting and population of interest, sampling strategy, study period and work plan. It has also discussed instrumentation which was used. Semi-structured interviews, focus group and document analysis have been discussed in this part. It has also discussed research dissemination strategy, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of the study,

foreseeable and unforeseeable adverse events and piloting of the study. The next chapter will present analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses findings of the study, an analysis of stakeholders' participation in the implementation of fees abolition. The information in the chapter reflects the three research questions. The first part presents findings on the knowledge and roles which key stakeholders play in the implementation of School Fees Abolition in Secondary Schools in Malawi. The second part discusses what education key stakeholders perceive as strengths and weaknesses in the

implementation of school fee abolition. The third part presents findings on how education key stakeholders feel school fees abolition should be implemented. Three sub-themes: lack of stakeholder engagement at all stages of the policy process, lack of planning and resource mobilisation for implementing the policy reform and lack of feedback on progress and results of implementing the policy reform, which are a contradiction of some important dimensions in policy implementation have emerged. Finally, it provides the summary of the chapter.

For easy understanding of the categories and details of schools and respondents involved in the study, under semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions, two tables have been developed below to illustrate the same.

4.2 Table 2 and 3 provides a summary of respondents who participated during the research study

4.2.1 Table 2: Summary of individual participants in semi-structured Interviews

Name of Institution	Type of Institution	Position Held	Sex of Participant (M)-Male (F)-Female	Number of Years Working at the Institution in that Position

School A	Day School	Head teacher	(M)	4 years 11 months
School B	Boarding School	Head teacher	(M)	4 Years
EDM Office	EDM Office	Education Division Manager	(F)	4 Years

Table showing the type of institutions, sex of their respective head teachers/EDM and number of years while at the institution and in that position

4.2.2 Table 2: Summary of individual participants in semi-structured Interviews

School	Type of School	Category of Respondents	Number of Interviewees and their Sexes
School A	Day School	Students	(Male) 2 (Female) 2
		Parents	(Male) 1

		PTA Members	(Female) 3 (Male) 2 (Female) 2
School B	Boarding School	Students Parents PTA members	(Male) 2 (Female) 2 (Male) 1 (Female) 3 (Male) 2 (Female) 1

Table showing categories and number of participants in the focus groups, their sexes and their respective schools

4.3 Education Key Stakeholders' Knowledge and Roles in the Implementation of the School Fees Abolition in Secondary Schools

The first research question was to find out the education key stakeholders' knowledge and roles they play in the implementation of the school fees abolition. The stakeholders involved in the study were head teachers, PTA members, parents, students and the Education Division Manager for Shire Highlands Education Division.

4.3.1 Education Key Stakeholders' Knowledge in the Implementation of Secondary School Fess Abolition and Lack of Stakeholder Engagement at all Stages of the Policy Process

In general, the findings have indicated that some stakeholders like head teachers and the Education Division Manager had clear understanding of the school fees abolition but they came to know about the abolition at a point it was to start to be implemented. As for other stakeholders like parents, students and the PTA members did not seem to have a clear understanding of the school fees abolition even at a time the policy reform was being implemented. This was demonstrated by their responses when asked on what they knew about school fees abolition in public secondary schools in Malawi. Thus, there was lack of one important dimension in policy implementation, which is stakeholder engagement at all stages policy process, as in the understanding of Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010). Therefore, this section discusses the differences in the understanding of the fees abolition among stakeholders at grassroots. For instance, when asked what they know about the school fees abolition in secondary schools, the Education Division Manager stated that,

“I know of the existence of the fees abolition. However, I was not engaged in its formation. I wish I was engaged at the policy formation stage. Students are not paying tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book revolving fund as were directed. However, students are paying boarding fees and PTA fund”. (Semi-structured Interview with the EDM. 15th November, 2023).

In agreement with the response of the Shire Highlands Education Division Manager was the head teacher for school A, SA/HT, who stated that,

“Yes, I know about the existence of the school fees abolition. However, I was only told how to implement it but was not engaged at its formation. We wish they engaged us, head teachers, at its formation stage so that our suggestions should be incorporated into it. Students do not pay tuition fees, text book fund and general purpose fund, as in the past, but are paying PTA fund every term”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Also making the EDM’s response substantial was the head teacher for school B, SA/HT, who stated that,

“I know about the school fees abolition. However, we were not engaged in the formation of the fees abolition. They needed to engage us so that we make our contributions to this. Tuition fees is not paid by students into account number one. In addition, we do not collect text book fund and general purpose fund from students, as we were directed. However, students are paying PTA fund and boarding fee is still being collected”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

From the findings, it is evident that the head teachers and the Shire Highlands Education Division Manager knew about the school fees abolition but at the stage of implementation. They were told the manner of implementing it that they should not be collecting tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book revolving fund. They managed to fulfill this part. They complained that they were not engaged before the fees abolition started to be rolled.

Since, head teachers and the EDM were only doing what they were told by education authorities above, the policy change conform to Top-Down models of policy implementation by Sabatier

(1986). In this case, the government made the policy and directed head teachers, who are at grassroots, to implement in the specified manner to achieve the goals the government suggested.

Head teachers did not have a say on the removal of some fees without replacement since they were not engaged at formation of the fees abolition. Schools were in danger of getting into financial difficulties due the removal of general purpose fund without replacement. This is typical of Top - Down models of policy implementation in which top authority designs the policy and its goals and direct grassroots members to simply implement. The means methods of implementing are not usually clear (Head and Alford 2013). Therefore, it was resolved that schools should introduce a termly paid PTA fund to fill the gap created by government's removal of general purpose fund. According to Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011), in a study conducted in New Zealand on evaluating public inputs on national park management, if stakeholders on the ground are not engaged in the early stages of policy making, the outcomes of the policy tend not meet the interests of such stakeholders. Similarly, Cook and Jacobs (2014) argue that engagement among stakeholders is needed for the success of a policy process. In Malawi's school fees abolition, head teachers complained that they were not engaged in its formation or development but they were just told to implement it, and hence they had no opportunity to contribute to what should be included in the in the issue. As a result, the removal of the other fees without replacement, which the government did, was not an interest of the schools and head teachers. However, head teachers were made to implement the same. The removal of the fees meant that head teachers would not manage to make payments for some operations and services needed for the running of secondary schools. Consequently, the counsel of the division officials and head teachers resolved to introduce a termly-paid PTA fund, in both day and boarding secondary schools, to meet costs for schools' operations and services.

However, parents, students and PTA members had no knowledge of the fee abolition even at a point of its implementation. For instance, when asked what they know about the abolition of school fee in Malawi's public secondary schools, parents for school A, SA/FGD/P1, P2, P3, and P4, stated that,

“We do not know about the school fees abolition. However, we pay PTA fund every term as directed by the PTA and the head teacher. We wish they invited us to the formation of the school fees abolition session so that we make contributions towards the same”. (FGD with parents from school A. 24 October, 2023).

In agreement with parents from school A were parents from school B, SB/FGD/P1, P2, P3 and P4 who stated that,

“We do not know about the school fees abolition. What we know is that we pay boarding fees. They did not engage us in the formation of the fees abolition. We wish they invited us, stakeholders at the grassroots. We could voice out our concerns truly”. (FGD with parents from school B. 17th October, 2023).

Substantiating parents' responses were students from school A, SA/FGD/S1, S2, S3 and S4; who stated that,

“We do not know about the school fees abolition. We were not even informed about it. In fact, we pay PTA fund each term. They needed to engage us at the formation. Our interests and opinions needed to be integrated into it”. (FGD with students from school B. 3rd October, 2023).

A similar response was made by students from school B, SB/FGD/S1, S2, S3, and S4, who stated that,

“We do not know about the school fees abolition. This is the first time to hear about it. What we know is that we pay one hundred twenty thousand kwacha, of which one hundred and five thousand kwacha boarding fees while fifteen thousand is PTA fund. What we are told are fee balances, when they check in their computer systems. We feel sidelined in that the fee abolition is being implemented without our input into it. They were supposed to consult and engage us at the formation stage of the fees abolition”. (FGD with students from school B. 19th October, 2023).

Making a similar response were PTA members from school A, SA/FGD/PTA1, 2 and 3 and PTA members from school B, SB/FGD/PTA1 and 2 who stated that,

“We do not know about the school fees abolition issue. The policy makers were supposed to engage us, the implementers at grassroots. However, through the meetings we had with the head teacher, parents are told to pay PTA fund every term”. (FGD with PTA members from school A. 12th October, 2023 and FGD with PTA members from school B. 17th October, 2023).

From the findings, it is evident that other education key stakeholders on the ground level: parents, students and PTA members, did not know about the school fees abolition in secondary school. They were not engaged prior to its formation. However, they are unconsciously implementing the same. Parents happen to be used at the implementation stage of the process where they are told to pay some fees.

In this, case, the fees abolition adopted the top-down models of policy implementation by Sabatier (1986) since it was only the top policy makers who formulated the policy change without engaging the parents, head teachers, the EDM, students and the PTA members. These are the people affected by the policy and grassroots implementers. Parents, students and PTA members did not know anything even when the policy change was being implemented while head teachers and the EDM knew the details of the policy change at the point the policy was to be implemented. However, the grassroots were just directed to implement the policy change in the manner the government decided. The government did not explain how schools should fill financial gap created by the removed fees.

These responses are also consistent with the findings of Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014), on impact of free secondary education policy on gender equality in secondary school education in Kericho County in Kenya which indicated that the implementation of free secondary education was challenged by parents' lack of accurate knowledge regarding free secondary education policy. However, unlike in Kericho County in Kenya where parents were refusing to make any financial contribution to schools, in Malawi, parents still pay boarding fees or PTA fund which have not been removed. They are paying the unremoved boarding fees and or PTA fund as a result of following what they are told by head teachers.

The findings of Masango (2001) in the study in which he was describing, analyzing and evaluating the role played by public participation in policy making and implementation in South Africa, at Port Elizabeth Municipality, found that lack of knowledge of the contents of the policy by stakeholders on the grassroots tend to produce problems at implementation stage. Similarly, in Malawi's secondary school fees abolition, the PTA's lack of knowledge of the school fees abolition has made them to participate wrongly in the implementation in that they are facilitating

the charging PTA fund every term, a thing they were not told by the Minister of education. Parents and students pay PTA fund, a fee which was not mentioned to be introduced. They are paying as told by head teachers and PTA executive members. That is, parents, students and the PTA members are making a wrong implementation of fees abolition due to their lack of knowledge as they were not engaged in the formation.

4.3.2 Education Key Stakeholders' Roles in the Implementation of the School Fees Abolition and Lack of Stakeholder Engagement at all stages of Policy Process

After knowing education key stakeholders' knowledge of the fees abolition, the study strived to find out their roles in the implementation. In order to find out education key stakeholders' roles in the implementation of the school fees abolition, respondents were asked questions and they explained what they were doing in implementing the fees abolition. Head teachers and the EDM were not engaged in the development because the knowledge of details of the fees abolition came at the point of implementing it. This signifies the top-down models of policy implementation by Sabatier, (1986) in which the top authorities design policies in the absence of implementers and direct grassroots people to implement accordingly. In addition, the policy reform indicates lack of stakeholder engagement at all stages of the policy process. This must have contributed to implementation failure. According to (Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma, 2010), one of the dimensions of policy implementation is engagement of stakeholders at all stages. That is, if stakeholders do not engage one another at all stages, the policy being implemented can not be successful. Similarly, parents, students and the PTA members did not participate in the development of the fees abolition because they did not have the knowledge of the school fees abolition even at a time it was being implemented. That is, education key stakeholders at grassroots were not engaged before the fees abolition was rolled out. Therefore, these stakeholders are only

involved at the implementation stage. While parents, students and PTA members had been implementing the school fees abolition unconsciously, as they had no knowledge even in the period it was being implemented, head teachers and the Education Division Manager were implementing the policy reform consciously. However, their knowledge came at a point it was to start. Therefore, this section will explain the roles of education key stakeholders in the implementation the fees abolition.

4.3.2.1 Avoiding Bad Company of Friends

According to the findings, one of the roles that students take in the implementation of the fees abolition is avoiding bad company of friends. When asked what they were doing so that they remain in school, in line with the aim of school fees abolition, a student from school A, SA/FGD/S2 stated that,

“To remain in school, I make sure that I make good choice of friends by deliberately avoiding people who may lead me into bad behaviours like alcohol and drug abuse which can destroy my education and future life”. (FGD with students at school A. 3rd October, 2023).

A similar response was made by a student at school B, SB/FGD/S4 who stated that,

“In order to make sure that I remain in school, I avoid choosing bad friends. Instead, I choose friends who have good behaviours so that I do not break school rules. Breaking school rules may lead to expulsion from school. Since I aim at a bright future, I avoid being expelled from school in order to achieve that”. (FGD with students at school B. 19th October, 2023).

Joining bad companies of friends could make a student emulate bad behaviour from their friends. This could cost them expulsion from school. However, students indicated that they were playing the role as means of remaining in school. The abolition of school fees aims at giving access to secondary education to all children. One way of receiving such access is to remain in school. Therefore, avoiding bad company of friends, was helping students to remain in school and hence making students get involved in implementing the school abolition unconsciously. Students indicated that they were avoiding bad company of friends in order to avoid emulating bad behaviour which can lead them to break school rules. Students chose good friends who could not influence them into bad behaviour. Hence, this helped them remain in school and accessed secondary education.

4.3.2.2 Paying Boarding Fees or PTA Fund

According to the findings, one role that education key stakeholders play in the implementation of school abolition is paying boarding fees or PTA fund. Education key stakeholders who play this role are parents. When asked to state what they were doing to ensure that their children remain in school as school fees abolition was being implemented, all parents expressed a surprise to hear that the fees are abolished while they were practically paying huge sums of money for their children education in form of boarding fees or PTA fund. However, parents were unconsciously implementing the very school fee abolition since they did not pay tuition fees, text book revolving fund or general purpose fund as required by the policy. When asked, a parent at school B, SB/FGD/P1 stated that,

“To make sure that my daughter remains in school I pay boarding fees of one hundred and twenty thousand Kwacha, Therefore, I do not agree that there is school fees abolition in secondary

schools”. (FGD with parents at school B. 10th October, 2023).

In agreement with the above respondent, another parent at the same school, SB/FGD/P2, stated that,

“I do not agree with the statement that there is school fees abolition. All I know is that for my child to remain in school, I struggle to find money for boarding fees”. (FGD with parents at school B. 10th, October, 2023).

From school A, a similar response was made by a parent, SA/FGD/P3 who stated that,

“Essentially, there is no school fees abolition because I pay PTA fund every term so that my child remains in school.” (FGD with parents at school A, 24th October, 2023).

Making a similar response, at school B, was a parent, SB/FGD/P3, who lamented that,

“To see my child remain in school, I sometimes have to sell bags of maize and add the money obtained to part of my salary to pay the boarding fees which is very high”. (FGD with parents at school B, 17th October, 2023).

Parents were clearly saying that they were paying boarding fees or PTA fund. However, they stated that they were doing this to have their children remain in school. The parents reject that there was school fees abolition because they were still paying boarding fees and PTA fund which were very high. However, by paying boarding fees or PTA fund and not tuition fees, text book fund and general purpose fund, parents were unconsciously implementing the school fees abolition as required by the government but at the implementation stage. Parents were only following what head teachers and PTA members told them. This also signifies the top-down model policy

implementation since parents were just following what top authorities told them to do despite their non-involvement in its formation.

4.3.2.3 Provision of Guidance and Counselling

According to the findings, one role taken by education key stakeholders in the implementation of fees abolition is provision of guidance and counselling to secondary school students and the community. Education key stakeholders providing the guidance and counselling are parents, head teachers, the Education Division Manager and PTA members. When asked to explain what they do to ensure that their children remain in school, in the era of fees abolition, parent from school A, SA/FGD/P3, stated that,

“School fees are not abolished because I pay PTA fund of fifteen thousand kwacha every term. However, in addition, to ensure that my child remains in school, I also provide guidance and counselling to my child to display good behaviour in school and never to envy children from rich families”. (FGD with parents from school A. 24th October, 2023)

A similar response was made by a parent from school B, SB/FGD/P who stated that,

“For my child to remain in school, I advise him to obey school rules so that he is not expelled. But the big issue is the payment of boarding fees which determines my child’s continuation with school”. (FGD with parents from school B. 17th October, 2023).

In addition, the head teacher for school A, SA/HT, in responding to what they do to make sure that other challenges do not prevent students from remaining in school, stated that,

“To ensure that other challenges like indiscipline and laziness do not prevent students from remaining in school, we call for PTA meetings and give them counselling and guidance in the

presence of their parents. The mother groups also assist in finding impregnated girls to be readmitted. We also invite other colleges and universities and some role renowned persons to provide them with career guidance and motivational talk. By doing this, students work hard in their studies with vision and positive mind such that absenteeism and drop out are reduced”. (Semi-structured interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

In agreement, was the EDM who stated that,

“We work with the Malawi Police Service, Districts Social Welfare, Mother Groups, mentor teachers and village headmen to provide guidance, counselling to the community on the goodness of school and bring drop outs back to school. We have managed rescue many children from economic activities they were involved in and bring them back to school. Some children were looking after cattle. However, the task is overwhelmingly huge. We are unable to bring all such children back to school”. (Semi-structured Interview with the EDM, 11th November, 2023).

Furthermore, a similar response was made by the head teacher, from school B, SB/HT, who stated that,

“Here at school, we provide guidance and counselling to students on various issues to do with behaviour and academic issues so that they remain in school and set goals in life and pursue them”. (Semi-structured Interview with the head teacher from school B. 3rd October, 2023).

A similar response was made by PTA members from school A, when asked to state, apart from the removal of the said fees, other mechanisms they put in place to ensure that students remain in school. The PTA members, SA/FGD/PTA1, 2, and 4 stated that,

“We go into students’ homes together with Mother Groups to provide counselling to students who are not coming to school on reasons other than school fees. For reasons like pregnancy we encourage them to consider readmission after the girl has given birth”. (FGD with PTA members from school A. 12th October, 2023).

It is evident that one role that education key stakeholders play in implementing the school fees abolition is provision of guidance and counselling to both students and the community so that students remain in school or are brought back to school. Such children have access to secondary education. In so doing, they benefit from the implementation of the school fees abolition being provided by the government. Hence, by conducting guidance and counselling, the education key stakeholders are involved in the school fees abolition implementation since it aims at giving access to secondary education to all children. However, parents and PTA members are carrying out the role not as a way of implementing the fees abolition as they indicated that they do not know about the fees abolition. Nevertheless, the role they are carry out, is at the end, having the power of implementing the same. The head teachers and the Education Division Manager, on the other hand, are carrying out the role with full knowledge of existence of the fees abolition. However, they did know it at the development stage.

Unlike the findings of Adan and Orodho (2015) in the study, Constraints of implementing free secondary education in Mandela Sub County Kenya and those of Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014) in the study, Impact of Free Secondary Education on Gender Equality in Kericho County-Kenya, which are silent on what school head teachers or other education key stakeholders did to

reduce or prevent students from dropping out or being absent from school on other grounds than school fees, the above responses, have clearly shown that the head teachers for school A and B, the Education Division Manager for Shire Highlands Education Division, the PTA members and parents help reduce and prevent absenteeism and drop out through guidance and counselling which also include readmission policy. In providing guidance and counselling, all stakeholders are doing their roles to ensure that students remain in school.

4.3.2.4 Fetching Well-wishers to Pay Boarding Fees or PTA Fund for Poor Students

Another role that education key stakeholders play in implementation of the school fees abolition is fetching well-wishers to assist paying boarding fees or PTA fund for poor students. The education key stakeholders who play this role are secondary school head teachers and the PTA members. When asked to state what they do to ensure that children from both poor and rich families remain in school in the era of school fees abolition, one PTA member from school A, SA/FGD/PTA3, stated that,

“We fetch well-wishers and non-governmental organisations who assist in paying PTA fund for the poor students so that they do not drop out of school”. (FGD with PTA member from school A. 12th October, 2023).

A similar response was made by PTA member for school B, SB/FGD/PTA1, who stated that,

“As PTA, we go about asking well-wishers like Members of Parliament to help in paying boarding fees for the poor students so that they continue with their education”. (FGD with PTA member from school B. 17th October, 2023).

Also, in agreement was PTA member from school A, SA/FGD/PTA4, who stated that,

“We go into villages to find students who have dropped on grounds of failure to pay PTA fund. Together with the head teachers, we find organisations which assist such students in paying PTA fund for them”. (FGD with a PTA member from school A. 12th October, 2023).

In addition, PTA member from school B, SB/FGD/PTA 2 stated that,

“Together with the head teacher, we fetch bursaries for students who are struggling or failing to pay boarding fees”. (FGD with a PTA member. 17th October, 2023).

Similarly, head teacher for school A, SA/HT when asked what they do with students who fail to make financial contributions to school like PTA fund or boarding fees, so that they do not drop out, stated that,

“We identify students who are struggling to pay PTA fund and when opportunities arise, we connect them to bursary scheme providers”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023)

The responses above show that one role that education key stakeholders play in the implementation of the fees abolition is to fetch well-wishers to assist with payment of boarding fees or PTA fund for students from poor families. This implies that although tuition fees, text book revolving fund and general purpose fund were removed, boarding fees and PTA fund are very high for parents. Therefore, to facilitate the implementation of the school fees abolition, in that even students from poor families should continue learning, head teachers and PTA members take a role of fetching bursary providers and other well-wishers to give a hand in paying for such students. Bursary fetching and provision helps poor students remain in school and access secondary education.

4.3.2.5 Coordinating with Member of Parliament to Help in Big Development Projects at School

According to the findings, one role which education key stakeholders play as they implement the school fees abolition is to coordinate with Member of Parliament to help schools in big development projects so that students and parents are not overburdened with financial contributions to school. The education key stakeholders who play this role are PTA members. When asked how they link with their Members of Parliament to assist them in big development projects needed in their school, so that parents are not overburdened with financial contributions to school, PTA member for school B, SB/FGD/PTA 4, stated that,

“We do coordinate with Members of Parliament in big development activities in the school. At one point, we wrote some Members of Parliament to help the school buy beds and build part of the fence. However, there was no assistance. Up to now, the problem, has not been solved.” (FGD with PTA members for school B. 17th October. 2023).

A similar response was made a PTA member for school A, SA/FGD/PTA4, who stated that,

“When we intend to have big development project, we ask the counsellor, not the Member of Parliament. It is the counsellor who informs the Member of Parliament on the development project. In our case, the counsellor, in liaison with the Member of Parliament, built us girls’ hostel. No student made financial contribution towards this project. In that way, students’ education was not disturbed.” (FGD with PTA member for school A. 12th October, 2023).

The above responses are in line with part of the speech made by the Minister of Education who, upon announcing the policy, stated that,

“If, for example, the school intends to sink a borehole worth K60, 000, they are allowed to collect money from parents but for big projects they should utilize Constituency Development Fund (CDF) so that parents are not burdened in payments towards school projects” (Minister of Education, in Nyasa times. September 7, 2018).

From the respondents, it is evident that coordinating with their Members of Parliament to help in big development projects, facilitates the implementation of school abolition since without the help of the parliamentarian, parents would be required to contribute huge sums of money so that their children should be allowed to attend classes. This could disadvantage students from poor families. With the aid that the Member of Parliament give, poor parents have a chance of having their children continuing to learn together with those from rich families. In so doing, the implementation of school fees abolition is smoothly facilitated.

4.3.2.6 Not Collecting Tuition Fees, General Purpose Fund Fees and Text Book Fund from Students

The findings also show that another role of the key stakeholders in the school fees abolition implementation is not to collect tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book fund from students. The role is played by secondary school head teachers. When asked on how the school fees abolition is being implemented, head teacher for school A, SA/HT, stated that,

“We do not collect tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book revolving fund. However, students pay PTA fund every term”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

A similar response was made by head teacher for school B, SB/HT, who stated that,

“We collect boarding fees from students. The fee does not include tuition fees, general purpose fund or text book revolving fund as per government advice”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

The above responses made by the head teachers are in line with the speech of the Minister of Education upon announcing the introduction of the secondary school fees abolition in Malawi. In his speech the Minister stated that,

“Public secondary schools will not collect tuition fees with immediate effect. Come January 2019 text book revolving fund and general purpose fund will also be removed. Boarding fees will continue to be collected”. (Minister of Education, in Nyasa Times. September, 7 2018.)

It is evident that one role that education key stakeholders play in the implementation of school fees abolition is not to collect tuition fees, text book revolving fund or general purpose fund as directed by the Minister of Education upon announcing the starting of the policy. The head teachers were not engaged in the formulation of the policy change but were being directed to implement the policy change. Rather, they are collecting boarding fees or PTA fund. Since, head teachers being grassroots implementers, were not engaged at policy change formulation but rather at implementation stage, the policy change adopted the top-down models of policy implementation, by Sabatier (1986). However, the Minister did not announce the collection of PTA fund. This shows that the resolution made by the counsel of Education Division Office and the school head teachers, to introduce the PTA fund, has made head teachers fail to implement the free secondary education policy accordingly. This renders the school fees abolition unsuccessful as it is not being implemented as designed.

*4.3.2.7 Facilitating Transfers of the Poor Students from Boarding Secondary
Schools to Community Day Secondary Schools when they can not Manage
to Pay Boarding Fees*

According to the findings, one role education key stakeholders play in the implementation of school fees abolition is to facilitate transfer of poor students from boarding secondary school to CDSS when such students are unable to pay boarding fees and have voluntarily suggested to be transferred. When asked what they do with students who fail to participate in school development projects or pay other forms of fees like boarding fees, the head teacher for school B, SB/HT, stated that,

“If students fail to pay the boarding fees, even in installments, they have to be withdrawn from school or are assisted to transfer to CDSS”. (Semi-structured interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

This finding indicates that head teachers are just performing a duty as directed by their authorities above. They did not make the decision on their own and they could not change it. This indicates that policy change adopted the top-down models of policy implementation by Sabatier 91986).

The response of the head teacher above is in line with the advice of the Minister of education’s suggestion for students in boarding secondary schools who fail to pay boarding fees. In part of his speech, the Minister stated that,

“If a student is in a boarding school finds boarding fees too high, they should be assisted to transfer to a CDSS because there is no any fee in CDSS” (Minister of education, in Nyasa times. September, 7 2018).

The facilitation of transfer of students, who are unable to pay boarding fees, to Day Secondary Schools, protects students from poor families from completely losing access to secondary

education. Clinging to boarding school could see students from poor families being dropping out of school for failure to pay boarding fees. Since PTA fund is cheaper than boarding fees, parents are expected to be able to pay for their transferred children. Therefore, on one hand, facilitating the transfer of students from poor families from boarding schools to Day secondary School, due to high boarding fees, is a necessary role that head teachers are playing in the implementation of the school fees abolition. On the other hand, the transfer is not fair for students since the quality of education in boarding secondary schools is higher than in Community Day Secondary Schools. This may facilitate reproduction of social inequalities between the poor and the rich.

The findings show that all education key stakeholders were carrying out their roles in the implementation of the fees abolition as directed by the government or authorities above without being engaged in the policy change formulation. Hence, the policy change adopted the top-down models of policy implementation by Sabatier (1986). Therefore, the objectives of the policy change of increasing access to secondary education to all children was not achieved. The government did not think of how to fill the gap of the removed fees for schools' survival. New fee, the termly-paid PTA fund, was introduced, making education very high for poor students. Head teachers and the Education Division Manager are implementing the policy change with knowledge of the knowledge of the fees abolition in their minds. However, their knowledge come at point it was to be implemented. On the other hand, students, parents and the PTA members were implementing fees abolition unconsciously. They are only playing their role as instructed by secondary school head teachers. For instance, they accepted non-payment of tuition fees, text book fund and general fund. Furthermore, the roles they are taking aim at seeing students remain in school which also happens to be the very aim of the school fees abolition policy reform. Therefore, parents, students and the PTA are implementing the fees abolition only through the roles they are taking. In that

way, the implementation of the fees abolition has not addressed real problems of these education key stakeholders. The introduction of termly-paid PTA fund in secondary schools has made the Education Division Manager and head teachers fail to make a successful implementation since the Minister of Education did not instruct schools to introduce the termly-PTA fund when announcing the fees abolition. Similarly, the acceptance of parents and guardians to be paying the introduced termly-paid PTA fund indicates that parents too, though in their ignorance, are failing to participate the policy reform.

4.4 What Education Key Stakeholders Perceive as Successes and Challenges in the Implementation of School Fees Abolition

The second question which the study strived to answer was what education key stakeholders perceive as successes and challenges as they participate in the implementation of the school fees abolition. The findings reveal that various categories of respondents perceive various challenges in the school fees abolition. The findings have, however, shown that all respondents do not perceive anything as a success in the implementation of the policy reform.

4.4.1 What Education Key Stakeholders Perceive as Successes in the Implementation of the School Fees Abolition

Findings have shown that all education key stakeholders do not perceive any success in the implementation of school fees abolition. For instance, when asked on what they perceive as a success in the implementation of fees abolition, the head teacher for school A, SA/HT, stated that, “*There is no any success in this fee abolition*” (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Similarly, head teacher for school B, SB/HT, stated that,

There is no success in the school fees abolition since students are feeling a pinch. The boarding

fee is very high for them. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

Likewise, students from school A SA/FGD/S1, S2, S3, S4, stated that,

We see no success in this fees abolition. FGD with students for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Similarly, EDM stated that,

“There is no success in the school fees abolition. If secondary school fees were abolished why do bursary schemes still exist in secondary schools? It means parents are failing to pay PTA fund or boarding fees. Their financial burden is not lessened”. (Semi-structured Interview with EDM. 15th November, 2023).

Making a similar response were PTA members for school B, SB/ FGD/PTA1. 2, 3, 4; who stated that,

“There is no success in the school fees abolition because many parents are failing to pay the boarding fees as it is very high” (FGD with PTA members from school B. 17th October, 2023).

Furthermore, parents from school A, SA/FGD/P3 and 4 stated that,

“There is no success in the fees abolition since the PTA fund is very high”. (FGD with parents for school A. 24th October, 2023)

In addition, a parent from school B, SB/FGD/P2 stated that,

“I do not perceive any success in the fees abolition. The boarding fees is very high for me”. (FGD with parents for school B. 17th October, 2023)

From the responses, it is evident that education key stakeholders, in the two schools where the study was conducted, do not perceive any success in the implementation of the school fees abolition since the PTA fund and boarding fees are very high. The bursary schemes help only few students whose parents are unable to pay boarding fees or PTA fund. The existence of bursaries is a good indicator that parents are failing to pay the boarding fees and PTA fund. Moreover, the policy makers did not engage the grassroots stakeholders who would suggest better ways of implementing the fees abolition than removing some fees without replacement.

4.4.2 What Education Key Stakeholders Perceive as Challenges in the Implementation of School Fees Abolition

In order to find out the challenges which education key stakeholders face in the implementation of the school fees abolition, respondents were asked to state what they perceive to be challenges in implementing the fees abolition. The respondents involved were students, parents, PTA members, head teachers and the EDM. The study found that respondents face the following as challenges: inability to pay the frequently hiked boarding fees and PTA fund, boarding fees or PTA fund fees being hiked frequently due to removal of general purpose fund and government's failure to fill the gap created by the removed fees.

4.4.2.1 Inability to Pay the Frequently Hiked Boarding Fees and PTA Fund

The findings have shown that one challenge that education key stakeholders face as they implement school fees abolition is parents' failure to pay the frequently hiked boarding fees and PTA fund. With frequent hiking of the PTA fund and boarding fees, parents fail to raise the money for the fees. When asked to explain the extent to which the school fees abolition has eased their parents' financial burden on their education, a student from school B, SB/FGD/S4 stated that,

“The fees abolition has not eased my parents in terms of financial expenditure towards my education because boarding fees is hiked almost every term, such that many of our friends are

dropping on grounds of high boarding fees”. (FGD with students from school B. 19th October, 2023)

A similar response was made by a student from school A, SA/FGD/S3, who stated that,

“The fees abolition has not assisted our parents because the PTA fund is becoming too high now. We are paying PTA fund amounting to fifteen thousand kwacha but it is announced that next term will be twenty five thousand kwacha”. (FGD with students from school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Supporting the response above, student from the same school A, SA/FGD/S4, lamented that,

“There is no assistance to our parents since the PTA fund, which we pay, is still very high for our parents and is not stable these days. It goes high frequently”. (FGD with students from school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Substantiating the responses of the students was the head teacher for school B, SB/ HT, when asked to describe the ability of students from poor families to pay for PTA fund or boarding fees or others apart from the removed fees. The head teacher stated that,

“Students are struggling to pay the high boarding fees. Due to rising cost of food and other necessities boarding fee is hiked frequently to enable us purchase such necessities. The financial gap created by the removed general purpose fund is filled by PTA fund and is charged together with the boarding fees. Out of one hundred twenty thousand Kwacha, fifteen thousand

Kwacha is PTA fund” (Semi-structured interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023). .

The responses of education key stakeholders indicate that parents and students are struggling to pay the high PTA fund and boarding fees. They are complaining about frequent hiking of PTA fund and boarding fees in this era. According to head teachers, the frequent hiking of the PTA fund and boarding fees is partly due to rising cost of living and also as means of filling the financial gap created by the removal of general purpose fund which schools were previously collecting every term. Government has not made a replacement of the general purpose fund. The frequent hiking of the PTA fund and boarding fees makes students from poor families fail to pay and hence drop out. As a result, they do not access secondary education which the implementation of the fees abolition intended to achieve.

4.4.2.2 Government’s Failure to Fill the Gap of the Removed Fees in Schools and Lack of Planning and Resource Mobilisation for Implementing the Policy reform

From the findings, one challenge that education key stakeholders face in the implementation of school fees abolition is government’s failure to make a replacement of the removed general purpose fund so that schools should run smoothly. This is a contradiction of one of the important dimensions in policy implementation, which is planning and resource mobilisation for policy implementation, from the understanding of Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010). For instance, when asked to describe the increase in government funding to their school, following the removal of the said fees, the head teacher for school A, SA/HT, stated that,

“The increase is only on paper. Essentially, there is no increase. There is no replacement of the general purpose fund. Hence, there is poor delivery of education services. The school’s daily

activities depend on PTA fund”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Similarly, head teacher for school B, SB/HT, testified the problem brought by the removed fees by stating that,

“There is no increase. Text book fund has been increased but is paid once in a year. The problem is the removed general purpose fund. There is no replacement for it. Hence, the introduction of termly-paid PTA fund to see us implement the fees abolition work and run the school well.

Making it worse, we sometimes go for six months without ORT and when it comes it is not in full”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

The failure of government to fill the gap created by the removal of the fees, especially, general purpose fund has left secondary school head teachers without any alternative of getting funds and resources to run secondary schools. As a result, the gap has been filled by the PTA fund which is now being paid every term. In boarding schools, PTA fund is charged along with boarding fees, making the boarding fees higher than before. Although the termly paid PTA fund is assisting schools meet some of their needs, poor parents complain that the amount is too high for them. Children from poor families are failing to continue with their education on basis of failure to pay the fees, making the objective in implementing the fees abolition collapse. This indicates that the change was effected without good planning in terms of financing and other resources for implementing it.

To sum up, education key stakeholders perceive many issues to be challenges in the implementation of fee abolition policy reform. The big challenges being failure to pay frequently

hiked PTA fund and boarding fees making poor parents unable to pay and hence their children drop out or absent themselves from school and government's failure to fill the gap created by the removed fees especially general purpose fund. Head teachers could fail to run schools without adequate funds which has resulted in introduction of termly-paid PTA fund. This fee has made parents' financial burden on education even heavier since the PTA fund has now become very high as compared to the removed tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book revolving fund. Therefore, the implementation of the fees abolition has not reduced financial burden in both schools and families where students come from. Rather, it has increased the problems.

The above finding is different from that of Nyogesa (2013) on determining factors influencing the implementation of free secondary education in Mumias district Kenya, in which after removing school fees, the government of Kenya gave capitation fund to secondary schools to act as a cushion to the removed fees. However, the capitation fund was inadequate and it was given very late.

In addition, Malawi government's non-consideration in filling the financial gap created by the removed fees, is different from what the government of Tanzania did when they introduced free secondary education. The study of Majumba (2019) on exploring challenges school administrators face while ensuring effective implementation of fee-free education provision in Bahi district in Tanzania, found that in an effort to cushion financial challenges that schools started to face due to removal of the school fees, the government of Tanzania introduced the disbursement of capacitation grants to secondary schools to purchase teaching and learning materials and other necessities at school.

4.4.3 What Education Key Stakeholders Have Done to Address Challenges in the Implementation of School Fees Abolition

Due to challenges faced in participating in the implementation of the school fees abolition, education stakeholders have devised some mechanisms to address such challenges. The findings have shown that to reduce the challenges in the implementation, the following mechanisms have been devised: introduction of termly-paid PTA fund in schools and allowing students to pay PTA fund and boarding fees in installments.

4.4.3.1 Introduction of Termly-Paid PTA Fund

According to the findings one challenge that education key stakeholders, especially parents and students, face as they implement the school fees abolition, in the two schools, is the introduction of the termly-paid PTA fund. This follows government's removal of general purpose fund without replacement. Therefore, the counsel of the education division officials and school head teachers, in both boarding and community day secondary schools, introduced a termly-paid PTA fund to meet costs of paying for activities and services in running the secondary schools. When asked to describe the increase of government funding to their schools following the removal of the said fees, head teacher for school A, SA/HT, stated that,

“There is no increase. The increase is only on paper. In real sense, there is no increase. We are forced to depend on PTA fund to run daily school activities”.

Similarly, head teacher for school B, SB/HT, also stated that,

“There is no increase. Sometimes, we go up to six months without funding. The introduced PTA fund is very small. Many times, we borrow money from boarding fees to buy some utilities and other services for the school”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

Substantiating the responses made by the head teachers was the Education Division Manager for Shire Highlands Division, in explaining how the school fees abolition is being implemented in the division, who stated that,

“Schools are not collecting tuition fees from students. The gap created by the removed general purpose fund is being filled by PTA fund”. (Semi-structured Interview with EDM for SHED. 15th November, 2023).

PTA fund has been in schools but was collected only when there was a need in the school. It was not collected every term. With the introduction of school fees abolition, a termly-paid PTA fund has been introduced. The termly-paid PTA fund is taking the place of general purpose fund so that schools should have funds to run schools’ daily activities. It is defeating the very objective of the implementation of the fees abolition since poor parents find it very high. School head teachers also fail to implement the school abolition according to its objective by chasing students who fail to pay this fee since the objective is to see all students accessing secondary education. This finding is different from those Abdul Nurdeen, Abdul Basit, Abdul Ahmed and Abdul Salma, (2018), Adan and Orodho (2015) and Goda (2018) who find that the introduction of free secondary education in Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania respectively, did not see the introduction of new fees to replace the removed fees. In these countries, there was increase in access to secondary education as evidenced by their schools’ high enrolment despite that there was drop outs in Tanzania and Kenya due to students’ indiscipline and failure of parents to pay for other issues to school.

4.4.3.2 Allowing Students to Pay PTA Fund or Boarding Fees in Installments

According to the findings, poor parents find boarding fees and PTA too high to be paid at once. As such, school head teachers allow the struggling parents to pay in installments. When asked to describe the ability of students from poor families to pay for other issues in the school, including

boarding or PTA fund, and how they assist such children to remain in school, head teacher for school A, SA/HT, stated that,

“Students struggle to pay PTA fund. However, we allow them to pay in installments. If they are too poor they are, when opportunity arises, considered for the available bursary schemes”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Similarly, the head teacher for school B, SB/HT stated that,

“Students struggle to pay boarding fees. We encourage parents of such students to come and agree on means of payment like in installments so that by the end of the term they should finish the fees”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

Allowing parents and guardians to make the payment of PTA fund or boarding fees in installments is assisting poor parents and guardians to finish paying the fees and avoid having their children being withdrawn from school on failure to pay the fees at once. In so doing, some poor parents have their children enjoying access to secondary education as required in objective of school fees abolition implementation.

Education key stakeholders are trying their best to put some strategies to see the implementation of school fees abolition work. School head teachers are allowing parents to be paying boarding fees or PTA fund, which poor parents find very expensive, in installments. In so doing, some poor students are remaining in school and get the education being provided as desired in the objective of the implementation of the school fees abolition policy reform. In addition, since general purpose has been removed without any form of replacement, and some school activities could not take place due to inadequate funds, the termly-paid PTA fund has been introduced to sustain the implementation of the fees abolition policy reform. In so doing, the provision of education to

children is made possible. However, poor students and parents find the termly-paid PTA fund a hindrance to get education as it makes education expensive for them.

4.5 How Education Key Stakeholders Feel School Fees Abolition should Implemented

In order to find out how education key stakeholders feel the school fees abolition should be implemented, respondents were asked to assess how the school fees is being implemented and suggest how they feel it should have been implemented. The study found that respondents feel that while some areas in the implementation need to included, other areas need to be maintained, other areas need to be changed and others need to be removed completely.

4.5.1 Areas that Need to be Included

4.5.1.1 Government Engaging Grassroots Stakeholders at the Formation of the School Fees Abolition and Lack of Stakeholder Engagement at all Stages of Policy Process

The findings indicated that stakeholders feel that for the successful development and formation of the school fees abolition government was supposed to engage parents, students, school head teachers, the PTA members, and the EDM before the policy reform was rolled out. This could help in gathering views and opinions to be considered into the final decision. For instance, when asked on how they feel the school fees abolition should have been developed and implemented, head teacher for school B, SB/HT, complained that,

“We feel left out in the formation of the policy. For a better policy, they were supposed to engage us so that we bring our views into the fees abolition” (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

Similarly, students for school B stated that,

‘They did not engage us at the first stage of the policy. How we wished they consulted us in the

policy formation. We could air out our suggestions for the fees abolition”. (FGD with students from school B. 19th October, 2023).

Making the above substantial, students for school A stated that,

“First of all, the government was supposed to engage us and know our opinions and suggestions before they rolled out the fees abolition” (FGD with students at school A. 3rd October, 2023).

From stakeholders, for the implementation of school fees abolition to register success, government was supposed to engage the stakeholders at grassroots to get their views and suggestions. This is in line with the arguments of Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010), who assert that for a successful policy implementation, there is a need for early stakeholder engagement at all stages of the policy cycle. That, is including policy formulation stage. In addition, Wilson, Wouters and Hardie-Boys (2011) who found that for citizens to get information of issues that affect them through the policy to be made, there must be active engagement of the citizens in policy process at the early stage. This is also similar to the suggestion of Head and Alford (2013) that top-down models’ proponents were supposed to engage grassroots members get their views in formulating a policy. To the contrary, in Malawi’s secondary school fees abolition, education key stakeholders complained that they were not engaged in the formation of the school fees abolition. Hence, the implementation the fees abolition has not registered success. Non-inclusion of head teachers’ ideas, at the formation stage, could result in schools’ inability to purchase teaching and learning resources and to pay for some services. The policy reform overlooked the financial implications of fees removal, without replacement, in schools. The implications could be easily foreseen by school head teachers. Parents and students could not understand why government removed small

fees and leave large ones. Therefore, early stakeholder engagement is of paramount importance for a meaningful policy implementation.

4.5.2 Areas Which Education Stakeholders Feel should be Maintained

According to the findings, areas that should be maintained in the implementation of the school abolition are provision of bursaries for students from poor families.

4.5.2.1 Provision of Bursary Schemes for Students from Poor Families

According to the findings, some education key stakeholders feel availability of bursary schemes for students from poor families should be maintained. When asked to point out the areas they desire to be maintained in the fees abolition, parents from school A, SA/FGD/P1, P2, P3 and P4 stated that,

“We can not tell what they should maintain. We don’t know where and why they made the decision. However, bursary provision for poor students should continue”. (FGD with parents for school A. 17th October, 2023).

Supporting the above idea was PTA members for school B who stated that,

“Let, at least, bursaries remain and should be extended to many students so that many poor children should be assisted to remain in school”. (FGD with PTA members from school B. 17th October, 2023).

The upholding of availability of bursary schemes to students from poor families has been pointed out as a thing which should be maintained so that the declaration of fees abolition may somehow work. This agrees with the NESIP (2020-2030) which states that Ministry of Education introduced secondary school bursary scheme in order to increase access and retention of boys and girls in secondary education. Without the bursary schemes, many poor students would not have access to secondary education since they would fail to pay either PTA fund or boarding fees. In so doing,

secondary education would be provided only to children from rich families, thereby defeating the objective of the fees abolition policy reform.

To have children from poor families accessing secondary education through provision of bursaries helps make the implementation of the fees abolition work. Otherwise, many children would be withdrawn from school on basis of failure to pay the high PTA fund or boarding fees. Therefore, stakeholders feel provision of bursaries should not be stopped.

4.5.3 Areas in the Implementation of Fees Abolition that should be Changed or Improved

According to the findings, some education key stakeholders felt that areas which should be changed or improved in the implementation of fees abolition should be: parents should be paying tuition fees, text book revolving fund and general purpose fund so that PTA fund and boarding fees should be shouldered by government, government officials must be coming to schools to inspect if fees abolition is helpful, government must construct classroom blocks for schools and government must deploy enough teachers for all subjects in all secondary schools. These are discussed below.

4.5.3.1 Parents should be Paying Tuition Fees, Text Book Revolving Fund and General Purpose Fund so that PTA Fund and Boarding Fees be Shouldered by Government

According to the findings, some education key stakeholders felt that for the meaningful school fee abolition implementation, government should shoulder the payment of boarding fees and PTA fund since they are higher and leave tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book revolving fund to be paid by parents. Currently, in the two schools, boarding fees is one hundred and five thousand kwacha and PTA fund is at fifteen thousand kwacha every term. If tuition was still there, it would have been at a maximum of one thousand five hundred kwacha, text book fund could be four thousand kwacha and general purpose fund could be at a maximum of four thousand kwacha.

Adding these three together could not be equal to the PTA fund amount. Education key stakeholders making this suggestion were parents and students. When asked to state which areas in the fees abolition should be changed or improved, parents from school B; SB/FGD/P2, P3, and P4, stated that,

“It would have been better if government shouldered boarding fees, so that we pay the rest.

That is, tuition fees, text book fund and general purpose fund. Boarding fee is larger for us.

Government must leave us to pay the remaining little fees if the aim of the implementation of fees abolition is to relieve us from burden of high fees”. (FGD with parents from school B. 17th October, 2023).

A similar response was made by parent for school A, SA/FGD/P3, who stated that,

“PTA fund must be removed since we are struggling to find it. Let government shoulder it. Probably, they should reinstate tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book fund for us since they were little”. (FGD with parents from school A. 24th October, 2023).

In agreement were students from school B, SB/FGD/S1, 2, 3 and 4, who stated that,

“If school fees have been abolished then let them remove also boarding fees. We know they can not remove boarding fees. However, let the government reduce the boarding fees by half so that many children should finish their education”. (FGD with students for school B. 19th October, 2023).

From the responses, it is evident education key stakeholders at grassroots felt that government has removed parts of the fees which are smaller as compared to the larger parts left for parents to pay. Hence, for a purposeful free fees abolition, they needed to exchange what they pay so that financial

burden on parents must be relieved. Parents, and students would like government to shoulder the boarding fees and PTA fund so that themselves be paying the little fees: tuition fees, text book fund and general purpose fund. In that way the relief from financial burden which the government wants poor parents to be relieved of, through the implementation of the fees abolition, would be accomplished.

4.5.3.2 Government must Support Schools in Purchasing Teaching and Learning Materials and Lack Resource Mobilization for Policy Implementation

According to some education key stakeholders, for the successful implementation of fees abolition policy reform, government must support secondary schools by purchasing teaching and learning materials. For instance, when asked on which areas in the implementation of fees abolition must be improved, a PTA member, for school A, SA/FGD/ PTA3, stated that,

“We wish that government should assist in buying materials for schools so that schools should run its teaching and learning activities so that the fees abolition should be meaningful.” (FGD with PTA members for school A. 12th October, 2023).

This suggestion was supported by the EDM, who stated that,

“If the government wants the free secondary education policy to achieve its meaning of freeness, let it provide teaching and learning materials like books, computers, chalk, note books, pens and the like. In doing this schools will run smoothly”. (Semi-structured Interview with the EDM for SHED. 15th November, 2023).

Likewise, head teacher for school A stated that,

“For meaningful free school fee abolition, I feel government must be assisting us with teaching and learning resources and fund schools consistently. Compare our schools with catholic schools where students pay a lot of money. Their national examination results are good because they are

able to buy resources which make running the school smooth. Fees abolition can only be possible and meaningful if schools have enough materials” (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Substantiating the above suggestion, head teacher for school B, SB/HT, stated that,

“For the smooth implementation of the school fees abolition, government must be supporting schools with chalk, dusters, chart papers and other teaching and learning resources.

In so doing, delivery of secondary education services to children will be efficient”. (Semi-structured Interview with head teacher for school B. 19th October, 2023).

From the findings, the fees abolition is being implemented without enough resources. Education key stakeholders, felt that for the implementation of fees abolition to be meaningful, government must be assisting schools by buying them teaching and learning resources so that the implementation of the fees abolition is meaningful and education is provided smoothly. Availability of teaching and learning materials would make education delivery, to all children, in the era of fees abolition, possible and efficient.

4.5.3.3 Government Officials must be Coming to Schools to Inspect if the Fees Abolition is Helpful and Lack of Feedback on Policy Progress and Results of Implementing

According to the findings, some education key stakeholders felt that government officials must be coming to schools to find out if fees abolition is helping relieve the financial burdens of the poor parents on education of their children. This is also the understanding of Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010) regarding one of the important dimensions in policy implementation which is feedback on policy progress and results of implementing. When asked on which areas in the

implementation of fees abolition they feel must be changed or improved, a student from school A, SA/FGD/S4 stated that,

“Government should inspect schools to see if the fees abolition is really helping in relieving financial burdens of the poor. Our parents are failing to pay PTA fund, yet they claim the existence of fees abolition. Let them assess if the policy is doing any help to our poor parents.” (FGD with students for school A. 3rd October, 2023).

Similarly, a parent from school B, SB/FGD/P1 stated that,

“We wish government should also be coming to the school to check if the fees abolition is really helping us, beneficiaries of the policy. We feel government is thinking that it is helping but the reality is that we are finding boarding fees too expensive”. (FGD with parents from school B. 17th October, 2023).

The similar response was made by the EDM who indicated that there has been no follow up or review of the fees abolition by Ministry of education officials since the policy was effected. When asked on how the ministry interprets the feedback it receives from secondary schools regarding implementation of the fees abolition, the EDM stated that,

“There is no such a feedback. They are supposed to review the implementation of this fees abolition. The ministry does not review the fees abolition. It has never asked anything from the schools on the same either” (Semi-structured Interview with EDM for SHED. 15th November, 2023).

Substantiating the response of the Education Division Manager, head teacher for school B, SB/HT, stated that,

“The ministry is silent on fees abolition implementation progress. We do not send them anything on implementation progress as they do not ask for it. We wish they came and to make follow up this”. (Semi-structured interview with the head teacher from school B. 19th October, 2023).

Likewise, head teacher for school A, SA/HT stated that,

“No feedback. The ministry is silent on the implementation feedback and hence, we do not send the ministry anything on the implementation of the policy. It would be good if they should be coming to check the progress of the implementation” (Semi-structured interview with the head teacher from school A. 3rd October, 2023).

From the education key stakeholders on the ground, government is not reviewing the school fees abolition by physically sending officials to assess the extent of help the policy is making on schools and on poor parents and their children’s education. Hence, it is difficult for the Ministry of Education to check if the implementation of the fees abolition is answering its objective of relieving the financial burdens on poor parents. This is a sharp contradiction to the understanding of Bhuyan, Jorgensen and Sharma (2010) regarding one of the important dimensions in policy implementation which is feedback on policy progress and results of implementing. Parents, and students would like Ministry of Education officials to be coming to schools and make inspection regarding the progress of the implementation of the fees abolition. Their inspection would help in addressing the challenges parents are facing as evidenced by their failing to pay the PTA and boarding fees. This would only be possible if the policy reform was being reviewed.

4.5.3.4 Government must Construct Classroom Blocks for Schools

According to some education key stakeholders, for the smooth and well participation in the implementation of the school fees abolition, they would wish the government constructed classroom blocks so that learning space should be available for all students in all seasons of the

school year. For instance, when asked on what suggestions she would have whole-heartedly given the government regarding the nature of implementation of the fees abolition, the EDM stated that,

“I would suggest that government must shoulder all financial expenditure of parents on the children’s education, except school uniform, transport and shoes. Schools were to be equipped with laboratories and teaching rooms. In so doing, the implementation of fees abolition would achieve the meaning. Parents would have been relieved of their financial burdens on education. Otherwise, the burden is till heavy since parents are sometimes required to make great financial contributions to some of these”. (Semi-structured interview with the SHED EDM. 15th November, 2023).

A similar response was made by PTA member, SA/FGD/PTA1, when asked on which areas should be improved in the fees abolition, who stated that,

“Government should construct classrooms to accommodate all learners selected at the school. Secondly, government should send us teachers in all subjects”. (FGD with PTA members from school A. 12th October, 2023).

From education key stakeholders, it is evident that education key stakeholders feel school fees abolition implementation can be successful with the availability of classrooms constructed by government. If the government does not construct classroom blocks, then parents will be required to make financial contributions to the projects which will also burden them financially. If classrooms are not available, delivery of education will be affected since learning under a tree or open space may be hindered by rains, sun, wind or noise. In so doing, education delivery in the era of fees abolition, will be greatly challenged.

Education key stakeholders have expressed various desires as to how they would wish the school fees abolition should be implemented. They thought that if their wishes were satisfied, there would be successful and meaningful implementation of the fees abolition. In the first place, stakeholders wished government engaged key stakeholders on the ground: parents, head teachers, students, PTA members, and the EDM in the development of the fees abolition. In so doing, their views could have been integrated into the fees abolition. Some education key stakeholders would like government to uphold the provision of bursary schemes for poor students in secondary schools so that the poor students should not drop out of school on grounds of failure to pay fees. Other education key stakeholders feel that to relieve poor parents of the financial burdens on education of their children, parents should be paying tuition fees, text book revolving fund and general purpose fund and that government must shoulder boarding fees and PTA fund. They felt that boarding fees and PTA fund are too expensive for the poor parents as compared to the sum of the three little fees: tuition fees, text book fund and general purpose fund. Other education key stakeholders feel that if the implementation of the free secondary education policy is to be meaningful government should be supporting schools by providing teaching and learning resources, constructing classrooms so that parents should not be overburdened in contributing financially towards the same as required in objective of the of the implementation school fees abolition. Education key stakeholders feel consideration of these factors is necessary to make the school fees abolition achieve its objective of increasing access to secondary education for all children.

4.6 Discussion of Results

The findings have revealed that parents, students and the PTA members did not have clear understanding of the free secondary education policy. This lack of understanding was a result of government's failure to engage them in the policy formation. The government did not make a

communication for the sake of publicizing the policy and engage these key stakeholders right at development and formation stage of the school fees abolition. As a result, parents, students and the PTA members did not participate in the development of the school fees abolition. In addition, their views were not included in the whole process. Resultantly, their roles in the implementation, have not been successful.

The above finding is consistent with that of Cherotich, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014), on impact of free secondary education policy on gender equality in secondary school education in Kericho County in Kenya which indicated that the implementation of free secondary education was challenged by parents' lack of knowledge regarding free secondary education policy. They were poorly engaged regarding the policy. In some cases, parents were refusing to make any financial contributions to school. Therefore, lack of clear understanding of a policy by key stakeholders caused them to participate in the policy implementation wrongly. For parents, students and the PTA members to have clear understanding of the fees abolition in Malawi, the government was supposed to engage them regarding the same. The details of the policy reform were supposed to be clearly made known to these key stakeholders at that early stage. This could greatly help these education key stakeholders contribute their views into the policy. This would also help them implement the fees abolition correctly.

In contrast, the findings have shown that head teachers and the Education Division Manager were implementing the school fees abolition with a clear understanding of the details of policy reform. However, their knowledge came at a point when the fees abolition was to be implemented. Despite their knowledge, head teachers accepted to enforce the payment of the introduced termly-paid PTA fund, a fee which was not earlier mentioned. This introduced fee was justified with government's removal of general purpose fund without replacement. General purpose fund was helping

secondary schools meet costs of some of their daily operations. The schools could not run their activities without funds. This finding is in line with the finding of Majumba (2019), on challenges facing secondary school administrators in effective implementation of fee-free education provision in Bahi district in Tanzania, where he discovered that some school administrators were caught stranded due to government's delay in giving them funds such that they resorted to borrow money from people who trusted them to pay back after government would honor their responsibility. This shows that, non-engagement of key stakeholders in planning for resources needed for a policy to be rolled out, brings problems at implementation stage specifically in terms of resource inadequacy.

A similar observation was made in the findings of Adan and Orodho (2015) on constraints in the implementation of free secondary education in Mandela West Sub-county, in Kenya, in which due to lack of early engagement with education stakeholders in schools, one challenge faced as stakeholders implemented the free secondary education, was government's late funding to secondary schools. Adan and Orodho (2015) found that government disbursed funds to secondary schools very late after the schools had suffered several months without funds. This affected the planning of school activities to do with money. As such the implementation of the free secondary education policy was greatly affected. For instance, due to late funding, there was late procurement of teaching and learning materials, late payment of non-teaching staff and using money budgeted for development on wages for hired teachers. In Kenya, it is not indicated how the government engaged school administrators to plan for resources needed in the free secondary policy. Therefore, problems such as delays in disbursing funds to schools started to stifle the policy implementation. With just delay in government funding, secondary schools in Tanzania and Kenya faced such challenges in the implementation of its free secondary education. In Malawi, where, general

purpose fund has been removed without replacement, the challenges in implementing the free secondary education policy are many and great. For instance, for fear that the removal of general purpose fund could cause some operations in secondary schools to come to a halt, the termly-paid PTA fund has been introduced for students to be paying to make the implementation of the free secondary education policy possible. The introduction of the termly-paid PTA fund has caused an outcry among poor parents because education in both day and boarding public secondary schools has become very expensive for them. In day schools, this fee is known as by its name, PTA fund, while in boarding schools, is included in the boarding fees, making it very high. Making it worse, the PTA fund is adjusted upwards frequently. Thus, PTA fund contributes to high financial expenditure by parents on payment towards education in this era. Therefore, the declaration of school fees abolition has directly defeated its very proposed objective which was to lessen financial burdens borne by poor parents on education of their children.

As found by Jeffery (2009), that early engagement of key policy stakeholders tends to yield successful implementation of a policy. The government of Malawi was supposed to engage school head teachers right at the policy formation stage. The School head teachers could advise the government to plan ahead on how to source funds for the removed fees. This could prevent the introduction of the termly-paid PTA fund which is a hindrance to access to secondary education for children from poor families.

Furthermore, the findings have indicated that the top authority, which is government, crafted the policy reform without engaging the EDM, head teachers, parents and students who are grassroots implementers and the affected stakeholders, at formulation. Their views were not incorporated into the policy change. However, later at implementation stage, the government directed the very stakeholders who were not engaged at formulation to put the policy change into effect. This

indicates that the school fees abolition adopted the top-down models of policy implementation by Sabatier, (1986). In this model, it is the top authority that has power to make policies and goals which are implemented by grassroots members. As a result, the fees abolition has been seen not to address the actual problems of the parents and students such that the fees have become higher than before. In so doing the objective of the policy change has not been achieved. There is no increase in access to secondary education for all as it was supposed to be. As suggested by Head and Alford (2013), the top authority, government, were supposed to engage the bottom stakeholders in the policy formulation and goal setting so that the implementation should not register failure and that the policy goals should be achieved.

Furthermore, the findings have shown that in the two secondary schools, although head teachers are key education stakeholders, were not engaged at the formation stage of the fees abolition. Hence, their ideas were not incorporated in the policy. Head teachers just realised that some fees have been removed without replacement but were made to implement the same. Since they could not run schools without enough funds, they accepted to enforce the payment of the introduced termly-paid PTA fund. While in day secondary schools the fee is known by its name, PTA fund, in boarding schools, it is included in the boarding fees, making it very high. This has contributed tremendously to the failure of the implementation of school fees abolition because this fee was not mentioned by the Minister of Education to be included. Poor parents are overburdened financially due to this fee. Consequently, the designed objective of lessening parents' financial burden has been totally defeated. The failure in implementing the policy by head teachers, due to their non-engagement in the policy making to express their views, is in line with findings of Masango (2001), on describing, analyzing and evaluating the role played by public participation in policy making and implementation in South Africa, at Port Elizabeth Municipality who, in the study, found that

when stakeholders on the ground are not engaged in the policy making, the implementation of such a policy comes with many challenges.

The findings have also revealed that since parents, students and school head teachers were not engaged at formation of the fees abolition, their interests and views were not accommodated. Hence, they have not made a successful implementation in the fees abolition. For instance, head teachers have been made not to collect general purpose fund which was very helpful to schools. The general purpose fund has been removed without its replacement.

In addition, the findings indicated that the fees abolition is not genuinely serving priorities of education stakeholders at grassroots. This is evidenced in making parents pay the high fees and the government shouldering little fees. These agree with the findings of Wouters, Hardie-boys and Wilson (2011), who found that a policy which does not include key stakeholders' views at initial stages tends to have problems during implementation such as not serving the interests of key stakeholders. Hence, the fees abolition in Malawi, which did not accommodate the interests and views of key stakeholders at grass roots, has seen boarding fees and PTA fund becoming even higher now for poor parents. As such, the problems of parents, students and head teachers have not been addressed through the declaration of fees abolition. For head teachers, schools fail to get replacement of general purpose fund and hence they have accepted to enforce the introduced termly-paid PTA fund which the Minister of Education did not mention to be included. This has contributed to the failure of the implementation of the school fees abolition. Hence, the declaration of school fees abolition in Malawi may be described as a sham since it is not serving the good of its intended beneficiaries.

To reduce challenges brought by the implementation of the fees abolition, the counsel of education division officials and head teachers resolved to introduce a termly-paid PTA fund to keep school

activities going. However, this strategy which is a redemptive to schools, has also become a heavy financial burden for poor parents. In addition, secondary schools are also allowing poor parents to pay the high boarding fees or PTA fund in installments so that such poor parents may be able to finish the fees payment. This strategy somehow prevents children from such poor parents from being withdrawn from school. However, some parents fail to pay the fees even in installments as they still find it very expensive.

The education key stakeholders made wishes as to how the school fees abolition should have been developed and implemented. All education stakeholders at grassroots wished the government engaged them at the formation stage of the school fees abolition so that their views and suggestion could be considered. In so doing, the fees abolition could serve their interest than the present situation. Parents and students would like government to shoulder the more expensive part which is boarding fees or the PTA fund so that they should be paying the cheaper part which comprises tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book fund. Finally, head teachers feel that for the school fees abolition implementation to run smoothly, government must support schools by purchasing teaching and learning resources. This could help schools reduce the amounts charged for PTA fund since part of the money is used to purchase teaching and learning resources. With government's non-assistance in purchasing teaching and learning resources, the termly-paid PTA fund will consequently be hiked frequently to meet the market's rises in prices of goods. If schools can not be raising the PTA fund according to prices of goods at the market, schools will not be able purchase resources for teaching and learning, thereby making education delivery completely impossible. Therefore, it is important that government should be purchasing teaching and learning resources for school.

4.7 Chapter Summary

From the findings, head teachers and the Education Division Manager are implementing the school fees abolition policy reform with knowledge of its details. However, they came to know at the point of implementation. They were not engaged at the formation of the fees abolition declaration. Parents, students and PTA members, on the other hand, are implementing the school fees abolition unknowingly. All these grassroots stakeholders were not engaged at the formation of the school fees abolition. Therefore, they did not participate at the development of the fees abolition. Their non-engagement meant that the interests and views of head teachers were not incorporated into the fees abolition. Thus, the fees abolition adopted the top-down model of policy implementation by Sabatier (1986). As such some contents of the fees abolition are not in line with the needs of grassroots stakeholders. For instance, government has removed general purpose fund, from the fees schools were collecting from parents and students, without replacement. Schools foresaw financial challenges ahead of them and hence, in trying to fill the financial gap head teachers, in both Community Day and boarding secondary schools, have accepted to enforce the payment of the introduced termly-paid PTA fund. The fee has also made boarding school expensive since it is included in the boarding fees. The introduction of this fee has rendered the objective of the implementation of the school fees abolition meaningless as children from poor parents are failing to access secondary education due to failure to pay the high boarding fees or PTA fund. All grassroots stakeholders feel that for a successful school fees abolition, government was supposed to engage all the stakeholders right from the formation stage so that the real problems faced at by education key stakeholders should be addressed. They were not supposed to just be doing things as directed by authorities above without prior engagement and justification for the actions. Parents and students stated that if they were given chance to express their views, in the early stages of the policy making, they would propose that government must shoulder PTA fund

and boarding fees since they are high so that themselves should be paying the less ones: tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book revolving fund. In so doing, their financial burdens on education could be lessened. Head teachers felt that for the smooth implementation of the school fees abolition of policy reform, government must be supporting schools by purchasing teaching and learning materials. The EDM felt that for school fees abolition to increase equity and access to secondary education, in addition to the removal of the tuition fees, general purpose fund and text book revolving fund, government must also consider constructing more classroom blocks and recruiting more teachers in all subjects to ensure smooth delivery of secondary education. Therefore, for the successful and meaningful implementation of the school fees abolition, all education key stakeholders at grassroots needed to be engaged right from policy formation stage. The interests of the education key stakeholders at the grassroots level like parents, students and head teachers were to be accommodated to make the school fees abolition implementation serve the needs of the beneficiaries. Finally, like any other public policy, early stakeholders' engagement on introduction of the school fees abolition should have been done so as to ensure proper planning of resources and financial funding for the successful implementation of the same. The early engagement of stakeholders could also ensure an honest and careful discussion of issues on replacement of the removed of tuition fees, text book fund and general purpose fund. This could prevent, the introduction of a new fees, termly-paid PTA fund, in secondary schools which is very high for poor families. The fees abolition has reduced access to secondary education for the poor.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The chapter presents the conclusion and the implications of the research study. The report is concluded by highlighting some areas that need further research studies which this study did not address.

5.1 Conclusion

The study has provided an in-depth analysis of the implementation of abolition of secondary school fees in Malawi in which two schools in the Shire Highlands Education Division, a boarding and a Community Day Secondary School, were targeted.

The analysis of the data in the study revealed that school head teachers and the Education Division Manager came to know about the school fees abolition and the procedure of implementing it at the point of implementation. They were not engaged at the formation stage. Hence, their views and suggestions were not be incorporated. They were told to implement the fees abolition in which fees were removed without the replacement. Despite their knowledge, school head teachers had been unable to implement the policy reform successfully in that they accepted to introduce a new fee, not mentioned by the Minister of Education, the termly-paid PTA fund. The fee was introduced because secondary schools could be financially handicapped due to removal of general purpose fund without replacement. When planning to implement a policy, the implementing stakeholders at grassroots must be engaged. They can help foresee financial implications of a policy to be implemented on the ground. Early engagement of all stakeholders could help to plan in advance how to implement the fees abolition without compromising the already existing important structures. That is, the school fees abolition in Malawi adopted the top-down models of policy implementation since it was only the top authority, which is the government that carried out the

policy formulation sidelining the grassroots players who are the EDM, head teachers, students and parents. The grassroots players' ideas were not accommodated but they were directed to implement the policy change in schools. New fee, which was not mentioned by the Minister of Education, termly-paid PTA fund, was introduced. Consequently, the policy change did not address the problem of a decrease in access to secondary education for the poor. The school fees have become higher, making secondary education even more expensive than before. To achieve good success in the policy participation, all key stakeholders need to be supplied with information regarding the policy through early engagement (Masango, 2001; Jeffery, 2009). The implementation of the school fees abolition is facing challenges due to lack of early engagement with stakeholders at grassroots.

In addition, the analysis also revealed that due to lack of engagement of all stakeholders at the formation of the secondary school fees abolition, the implementation did not register any success but rather several challenges. One biggest challenge was inability of parents to pay the high termly-paid PTA fund in both boarding and day secondary schools. The termly-paid PTA fund was very high for day students and also made boarding fees too high for poor boarding school students. Many students were dropping out of school for failure to pay the high boarding fees and termly-paid PTA fund. Furthermore, government was not buying teaching and learning materials for secondary schools. Schools were financially constrained. Thus, the school fees abolition implementation was surprisingly defeating its own objective of providing access to secondary education to all children.

Furthermore, the analysis found all education key stakeholders felt that for a successful implementation of school fees abolition policy reform, all grassroots stakeholders were supposed to be engaged right from its formation so that their views and interests should be incorporated.

In addition, the analysis found that parents, students and the PTA felt that to make the implementation of the school fees abolition meaningful, government must shoulder the termly-paid PTA fund and the boarding fees because these are very high. Parents and guardians should instead shoulder tuition fees, textbook fund and general purpose fund since the amount is little for them. Head teachers felt that the implementation of the fees abolition could register success if government would be supporting schools with teaching and learning resources.

Finally, analysis also revealed that government was not reviewing the school fees abolition by coming to schools to assess if the implementation of school fees abolition was meeting the objective laid at its inoculation. As such, parents were suffering with high fees payments without government's knowledge. Children from poor families were still dropping out thereby reducing access to secondary education. The government could only know the reality of the fees abolition implementation as to whether it was increasing access to secondary education for the poor by, reviewing it.

Therefore, the main argument for this study is that the implementation of school fees abolition was not fully successful because of non-engagement of education key stakeholders at grassroots in its formation and lack of planning for resource mobilisation for its implementation. The non-engagement of education key stakeholders at grassroots resulted in stakeholders' inability to implement the policy reform successfully. For instance, government's non-engagement of secondary school head teachers, who are grassroots implementers, at the formation stage, made head teachers fail to implement the fees abolition by accepting to reinforce payment of termly-paid PTA fund which was not mentioned at the inoculation of the policy change. In addition, non-engagement of grassroots stakeholders resulted in government's inability to design the school fees abolition in such a way that its implementation could benefit the intended beneficiaries who are

poor parents and students through increased access to secondary education. The lessening of financial burden of parents on education was one of the objectives of the policy reform. In contrast, boarding fees and PTA fund became very high for the poor than before. As such, the poor were dropping out of school on grounds of failure to pay fees. In addition, non-engagement of stakeholders at formation made policy makers lose sight of the financial implications of removing some fees, especially general purpose fund, without replacement on the operation of secondary schools' daily activities. Hence, secondary schools were getting to a point of financial handicaps. As such, a termly-paid PTA fund was introduced in both day and boarding secondary schools. The new fee proved to be a great contributor in reducing access to secondary education because it made secondary education very expensive for students from poor families. This was result of government's non-engagement of key education stakeholders at the grassroots, head teachers, at policy formation stage, who could foresee the financial challenges secondary schools could face with the removal of the fees. The head teachers could advise the government on best ways of implementing the fees abolition. The incorporation of the grassroots stakeholders' views could help in making the implementation of school fees abolition assist poor students to access secondary education. At the same time, the incorporation of the views of head teachers, would ensure that secondary schools' capacity to sustain themselves financially was not compromised. The incorporation of parents and students' ideas would have also ensured that no new school fee was introduced in the very era when financial burden on education was to be lessened. Unlike in Ghana where the free senior high school managed to relieve parents of their financial burdens towards education of their children, (Abdul Nurdeen, Abdul Basit, Abdul Ahmed and Abdul Salma, 2018), the implementation of the school fees abolition in Malawi, defeated its very set objective of lessening financial burden borne by parents on their children's education. Many children from

poor parents were failing to access secondary education since the PTA fund and boarding fees became very high. As such, the implementation of the school fees abolition was not only unsuccessful but also a sham.

5.2 Implications

Government's formulating of the school fees abolition policy reform, without engaging grassroots key stakeholders, such as parents, students, the EDM, PTA members and head teachers, made the implementation of the policy change a failure. Grassroots stakeholders' views were not accommodated into the policy change. In addition, new fee, not mentioned by the Minister of Education at inoculation of the policy change, the PTA fund, was introduced, which proved to be a great contribution in making education very expensive. In so doing, access to secondary education, for the poor, was reduced. Grassroots stakeholders were only directed to implement the policy change as designed by the government alone. This indicates that the fees abolition adopted the top-down models of policy implementation by Sabatier (1986). The top authorities had the prerogative to give their views, sidelining the grassroots stakeholders. This resulted in the implementation failure. Engaging grassroots at the formation would help policy makers get views and good ideas which would enable the school fees abolition policy reform to be crafted in line with the context on the ground so that it registers success at the implementation and achieves its objective of increasing access to secondary education for all children.

Furthermore, lack of knowledge regarding the policy due to non-engagement, of one group of policy stakeholders tends to make some policy stakeholders implement a policy process wrongly or sometimes, unconsciously. As such, they may not play their roles to achieve the needed set objective. Parents, students and the PTA members indicated that they were playing their roles only to help students remain in school but not as a way implementing the school fees abolition policy

change. As such, they accepted to be paying the termly-paid PTA fund which was not mentioned at the inoculation of the school fees abolition. Hence, the increasing access to education for all children, was not achieved. The government needed to revise their means and methods of communicating the introduced policy changes and decisions to key stakeholders at grassroots so that all stakeholders should have details of the policy. In so doing, the participation of stakeholders in implementing the policy would be successful.

Finally, non-engagement of key stakeholders at grassroots who are both implementers and beneficiaries of the policy, to let them bring in their views, opinions and interests into a policy at the policy formation stage, tends to make the policy implementation unable to serve the goodness of beneficiaries of the policy. Unlike in Ghana where the introduction of free senior high school helped in increasing access to secondary education for children from poor families (Abdul Nurdeen, Abdul Basit, Abdul Ahmed and Abdul Salma, 2018), the implementation of school fees abolition in Malawi's public secondary schools even reduced poor children's access to secondary education. Boarding fees and PTA fund became higher because of the introduction of the fees abolition. Poor children were failing to pay the fees and hence are dropping out. Therefore, the fees abolition failed to lessen the financial burden of the poor parents on education of their children following government's non-engagement of parents in the formation. The school head teachers were to suffer economic deficiency due to the removed categories of fees without replacement. However, a termly-paid PTA fund was swiftly introduced to be a financial remedy for schools' continuing operations. Engagement of all stakeholders at early stage in a policy process is very important (Jeffery, 2009). The engagement of school head teachers at the formation stage could foresee the financial deficiency which the removal of the fees could bring to schools. Hence, honest plans could be devised to prevent subtly introducing the high termly-paid PTA fund, which

defeated the very objective of lessening financial burden borne by poor parents and increasing access to secondary education for all children.

Government should relieve parents by paying for PTA funds and boarding fees so that parents should be paying tuition fees, text book fund and general purpose fund to make the implementation of the school fees abolition meaningful.

The practice of transferring poor students from boarding schools to community day secondary schools, if they fail to pay boarding fees, is unjust and it perpetuates social inequalities. Poor children must be assisted to remain in boarding schools where they are selected to so that they too acquire good quality education that will assist in their upward social mobility.

5.3 Areas for Further Study

The following areas are some suggestions for further research:

An assessment of the impact of the implementation of the school fees abolition in public secondary schools in Malawi on attainment of quality education. An analysis of school governance and management skills in the implementation of the school fees abolition in public secondary schools in Malawi.

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APPENDICES

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND LETTERS OF AUTHORISATION

Appendix A: Education Division Manager

INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (SHED)

A. SELF INTRODUCTION

I am Leston Nyambalo Adamson, a student from University of Malawi, and a teacher at Thyolo Secondary School, pursuing Master of Education degree in Policy Planning and Leadership. As one of requirements for the degree, am conducting research entitled **Analysis of Education Key Stakeholders' Perspectives in the Implementation of Secondary School Fees Abolition in Malawi: A Case of Selected Schools in Shire Highlands Education Division**. This study intends to collect information about the implementation of the policy from key education stakeholders, the Education Division Manager, the head teachers, the PTA, Parents and learners. Therefore, you being key education stakeholder, have been chosen purposely to give yours views on the subject. The research is not in any way political. The information you will provide will be treated as confidential and will be used solely for the academic purpose. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION DIVISION

What is the name of this education division?

How many schools are in this education division?

Of the schools in the division how many are boarding type?

BIOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER

Name of the education division manager:

Sex of the education division manager :

For how long have you been working in your position in this division?

Place of the interview:

Date of the interview:

Time of the interview:

**A. WHAT ARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND ROLES OF EDUCATION KEY
STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL FEES
ABOLITION?**

- What do you know about Malawi secondary school fees abolition as a policy change?
- How do you ensure that in the era secondary school fees abolition all students in schools of this division remain in schools?
- How do you ensure that head teachers, PTA members and students, in your division, adhere to contents of the policy regarding the laid out implementation procedure of secondary school fees abolition?
- What feedback procedure do you make to the ministry of education regarding the manner the policy change has been welcomed and is implemented in the secondary schools?
- What feedback do you receive from the Ministry of Education on how schools in your division are progressing in implementing the policy change?
- How do you share with schools in your division, the Ministry of Education's interpretation of the schools' progress in implementing the secondary school fees abolition?

B. WHAT DO EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE AS SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- How is secondary school fees abolition being implemented in this division?
- What successes have been achieved in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition in this division?
- Apart from payment of school fees, what other challenges still make some learners in schools drop out of school?
- What strategies have been put in place to reduce drop out due to other challenges in this era of secondary school fees abolition?
- Other than the removed school fees and MANEB examination fees, what other financial contributions are students in schools required to make to schools?
- Following the removal of the said fees, how would you describe the increase in government funding to schools so that the schools meet their needs sufficiently?
- What challenges have you experienced in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition because you were not involved in the formulation and making of the policy change?
- What general feedback are you receiving on the implementation of secondary school fees abolition from secondary schools of this division?
- How does the ministry of education interpret the feedback it receives from secondary schools regarding implementation of the secondary school fees abolition?

C. HOW DO KEY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS FEEL SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED?

- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition do you wish to be maintained?
- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be improved?
- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be changed?
- If you were given a chance to advise the government, what would you suggest to be the best way of implementing the secondary school fees abolition in Malawi?
- If you were engaged in the formulation and making of the policy what suggestions would you whole-heartedly make regarding the nature and implementation of this policy change?
- How would your being engaged in the formulation and making of the secondary school fees abolition have greatly helped the smooth implementation of the policy change?

Appendix B: Head teachers

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEAD TEACHER

SELF INTRODUCTION

I am Leston Nyambalo Adamson, a student from Chancellor College, a teacher at Thyolo Secondary School, pursuing Master of Education degree in Policy Planning and Leadership. As one of requirements for the degree, am conducting research entitled **An Analysis of Education Key Stakeholders' Perspectives in the of Implementation of Secondary School Fees Abolition in Malawi: A Case of Selected Schools in Shire Highlands Education Division.**

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

What is the name of this school?

What type of school is your secondary school? (Boarding/ Community day secondary school; Coeducation or Male only or Female only?)

What is the enrolment of the school?

How would you compare the current school enrolment with years before introduction of free secondary education policy?

BIOGRAPHIC DATA OF HEAD TEACHER

Name of Head Teacher:

Sex of Head Teacher:

For how long have you been working at this school?

Have you ever been trained or participated in financial management inset?

Place of interview:

Date of interview:

Time of interview:

A. WHAT ARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND ROLES OF EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- What do you know about Malawi Secondary school fees abolition?
- How do you ensure that parents are involved in development activities in this period of secondary school fees abolition?
- How often in a school year do you have development projects and other activities which require students to contribute money towards the same?
- How do you help students from poor families who fail to make financial contributions to development projects or other activities so that they may remain in school?
- How do you involve students, parents or guardians and PTA members in sending feedback to the division or ministry of education on the policy change implementation is progressing?

- How do you share with students, parents and guardians the Ministry of Education's interpretation of the schools' progress in implementing the secondary school fees abolition?

B. WHAT DO EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE AS SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- What can you say on how secondary school fees abolition is implemented?
- What successes have been achieved in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition?
- Apart from payment of school the fees, what other challenges still make some learners absent themselves from or drop out of school?
- How do you make sure that other challenges other than school fees do not cause students' absenteeism or drop-out in this era of secondary school fees abolition?
- Other than the removed school fees and MANEB examination fees, what other financial contributions are students required to make to school?
- How would you describe ability of students from poor families to pay for other issues in school?
- What do you do with students whose parents fail to participate in school development projects or pay other forms of school fees like boarding fees?
- Following the removal of the said fees, how would you describe the increase in government funding to your school so that the school meets its needs sufficiently?

- How would you compare the current school enrolment with years before introduction of school fees abolition?
- What can you say are challenges in the implementation secondary school fees abolition at your school?
- What challenges have you experienced in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition because of you were not involved in the formulation and making of the policy?
- What feedback do you receive from the division or the ministry regarding the feedback you give them from the implementation of the policy change at your school?

C. HOW DO KEY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS FEEL SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED?

- What can you say on how secondary school fees abolition is being implemented?
- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition would you wish should be maintained?
- Which areas in the implementation school fees abolition should be improved?
- Which areas in the implementation of the secondary school fees abolition should be changed?
- If you were given a chance to advise the government, what would you suggest to be the best way of implementing the secondary school fees abolition in Malawi?
- How does the feedback you receive from the ministry of education suggest the nature of satisfaction with the implementation progress of the policy change?
- How would your being engaged in the formulation and making of the secondary school fees abolition have greatly helped the smooth implementation of the policy?

- If you were engaged in the formulation and making of the policy what suggestions would you have whole-heartedly made regarding the nature and implementation of the policy change?

Appendix C: PTA members

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PTA MEMBERS

SELF INTRODUCTION

I am Leston Nyambalo Adamson, a student from Chancellor College, a teacher at Thyolo Secondary School, pursuing Master of Education degree in Policy Planning and Leadership. As one of requirements for the degree, am conducting research entitled: **An Analysis of Education Key Stakeholders' Perspectives in the Implementation of Secondary School Fees Abolition in Malawi: A Case of Selected Schools in Shire Highlands Education Division**. This study intends to collect information about the implementation of the policy from key education stakeholders, the education division manager, the head teachers, PTA members and parents. Therefore, you being key education stakeholder, have been chosen purposely to give yours views on the subject. The research is not in any way political. The information you will provide will be treated as confidential and will be used solely for the academic purpose. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND PTA MEMBERS

What is the name of your school?

What type of school is this secondary school? (Boarding or Community Day Secondary School)

How many members are in this school's PTA?

How many males? How many females?

A. WHAT ARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND ROLES OF ROLES EDUCATION KEY
STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE SECONDARY
EDUCATION POLICY?

- What do you know about secondary school fees abolition?
- Mkudziwa chiyani zokhuza school ya sekondale yosalipila?
- What do you do to ensure that students from both poor and rich families remain in school in this era of secondary school fees abolition?
- Mumachita chiyani powonetsetsa kuti ophunzira onse, ochokera mabanja osauka ndi olemera akupitilira ndi maphunziro awo mu nthawi ino ya sukulu yosalipila?
- Apart from removing the said fees, which other mechanisms do you put in place to help students to remain in school?
- Kupatula kuchotsa malipiro a sukulu, ndi njira zina ziti zimene mwaika kuti muthandizebe ana kuti asasiye sukulu.
- How do you help parents and students understand the importance of getting involved in development activities in this era of school fees abolition?
- Mumathandiza bwanji makolo ndi ophunzira kumvetsetsa ubwino wotenga nawo mbali pa zochitika za chitukuko mu nthawi imene sukulu ndi yosalipila?
- How do you coordinate with the school head teacher, division officials, parents and students when you want to introduce or adjust any form of fee in the school in this era of secondary school fees abolition?

- Mumalumikizana bwanji ndi aphunzitsi aakulu, a ku division, makolo ndi ophunzira pamene mukufuna kuyamba, kutsitsa kapena kukweza malipiro a sukulu mu nyengo ino ya sukulu yosalipila?
- How do you coordinate with the school head teacher, parents or guardians and learners, in sending feedback to the division or ministry of education, on the progress of implementation of the secondary school fees abolition?
- Mumalumikizana motani ndi mkulu wa sukulu, makolo a ophunzira ndi ophunzira, potumiza ku division kapena unduna wa maphunziro, za momwe ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale ikuyendera?
- How do you access the Ministry of Education's interpretation of your school's progress in implementing the secondary school fees abolition?
- Mumakhala ndi mwayi wotani wopeza nawo zotsatira zimene unduna wa za maphunziro ukuonera m'mene sukulu yanu ikuchitira pa kayendetsedwe ka ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale?
- How do you coordinate with your Constituency's Member of Parliament to help your school in other big development projects so that students and guardian are not overburdened with school financial contributions?
- Mumalumikizana bwanji ndi phungu wanu wa ku nyumba ya malamulo kuti athandizapo pa zitukuko zazikuluzikulu za pa sukulu, ndi cholinga chofuna kupepusa ophunzira ndi makolo kuti asapsinjike ndi zolipiralipira?

B. WHAT DO EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE AS SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- Which areas can you describe as successes in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition?
- Ndi mbali ziti zimene munganene kuti mwapeza chipambano mu kuyendetsedwe ka ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila?
- How often do you request financial contributions from students or their parents towards development projects or other important activities in the school in this era of school fees abolition?
- Mumayitanitanitsa malipiro ena mochuluka bwanji kuchokera kwa makolo kapena ophunzira kuti muchitire ntchito za chitukuko kapena zinthu zina zofunika pa sukulu mu nthawi ino ya sukulu yosalipila?
- What do you do with students whose parents have failed to contribute towards development projects or other important activities in the school?
- Mumatani nawo ophunzira omwe alephera kupereka ndalama ya chitukuko kapena ya zochitika zina zofunika za pa sukulu?
- How do you assist parents and students who are unable to differentiate between development contributions and school fees?
- Mumatani nawo makolo ndi ophunzira omwe amalephera kusiyanitsa pakati pa ndalama za chitukuko ndi ndalama zolipira sukulu?
- What challenges have you experienced in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition because you were not involved in the formulation and making of the policy?

- Ndi mavuto ati amene mwakumana nawo chifukwa choti simunatenga nawo mbali mu kukonza ndi kupanga ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale?
- What other challenges have you encountered in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition?
- Ndi mavuto ena ati amene mwakumana nawo poyendetsa ndondomeko ya sukulu sekondale yosalipila?
- What have you done to address the challenges?
- Mwachita chiyani kuti muthane ndi mavutowo?

C. HOW DO STAKEHOLDERS FEEL SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED?

- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be maintained?
- Ndi magawo ati ya kayendetsedwe ka ndondomeko ya sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila amene ayenera asasinthidwe?
- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be improved?
- Ndi magawo ati a ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila amene ayenera kukonzedwanso?
- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be changed so that the policy's goal of ensuring equity and access of secondary education to both the poor and the rich children be achieved?
- Ndi magawo ati a mu ndondomeko ya sukulu ya sekondale ya ulere amene ayenera kusinthidwa kuti cholinga cha ndondomeko ya sukulu ya ulere choti pasakhale kusiyana pa mwayi wopeza maphunziro pa olemera ndi osauka ikwaniritsidwe?

- If you were given a chance to advise the government how would you suggest the secondary school fees abolition should be implemented?
- Mukanakhala kuti mwapatsidwa mwayi woti mulangize boma mukanapereka maganizo otani a m'mene boma lingayendetsere ndondomekoyi.
- If you were engaged in the formulation and making of the policy what suggestions would you whole-heartedly make regarding the nature and implementation of the policy change?
- Mukanapatsidwa mwayi wopanga nawo ndondomeko ya sukulu ya ulereyi mukanapereka maganizo otani a m'mene ndondomekoyi inayenera kukhalira komanso kuyendetsedwera?
- How would your being engaged in the formulation and making of the secondary school fees abolition have greatly helped the smooth implementation of the policy change?
- Mukanatenga nawo mbali kwanu pa kupanga kwa ndondomeko ya sukulu ya ulereyi, zikanathandiza bwanji kuti ndondomekoyi ichitike mosavuta?

Appendix D: Parents

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

SELF INTRODUCTION

I am Leston Nyambalo Adamson, a student from University of Malawi, a teacher at Thyolo Secondary School, pursuing Master of Education degree in Policy Planning and Leadership. As one of requirements for the degree, am conducting research entitled: **An Analysis of Education Key Stakeholders' Perspectives in the Implementation of Secondary School Fees Abolition in Malawi: A Case of Selected Schools in Shire Highlands Education Division**. This study intends to collect information about the implementation of the policy from key education stakeholders, the head teacher, the PTA, parents and learners. Therefore, you being key education stakeholder, have been chosen purposely to give yours views on the subject. The research is not in any way political. The information you will provide will be treated as confidential and will be used solely for the academic purpose. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARENT

What (is) are your name(s)?

How old are you?

What (is) are your occupation(s)?

What (is) are your marital status?

How many children, attending secondary school, are you supporting?

What type of school is the secondary school you child/ children is/are attending? (Boarding or Community Secondary School? Coeducation or Males only or Females only?)

How do you get money to pay for your children's education?

Place of interview

Date of interview

Time of interview

**A. WHAT ARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND ROLES OF
EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
FEES ABOLITION?**

- What do you know about secondary school fees abolition?
- Mukudziwa chiyani zokhuza ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya sekondale?
- What do you do to ensure that your children remain in school in this era of secondary school fees abolition?
- Mumatani powonetsetsa kuti mwana/ ana anu sakusiya sukulu mu nthawi ino ya sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila?
- How do you make sure that your child does not absent himself or herself unnecessarily from school during this era of school fees abolition?
- Mumawonetsetsa bwanji kuti mwana/ ana anu sakujomba kusukulu mwachisawawa mu nthawi ino ya sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila?
- How do involved in development projects at school so that your children learn in a conducive environment?
- Mumatenga nawo gawo motani pa ntchito ya chitukuko cha pa sukulu yanu kuti mwana/ ana anu aziphunzira malo abwino?
- How do you get involved in sending feedback of the implementation progress of the secondary school fees abolition to the division or the ministry of education?

- Mumatenga nawo motani potumiza zotsatira za momwe ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale ikuyendera ku division kapena ku unduna wa za maphunziro?
- How do you access the Ministry of Education's interpretation of your school's progress in implementing the secondary school fees abolition?
- Mumakhala ndi mwayi wotani wopeza nawo zotsatira zimene unduna wa za maphunziro ukuonera m'mene sukulu yanu ikuchitira pa kayendetsedwe ka ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale?

B. WHAT DO KEY EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE AS SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- Which areas in the implementation of the secondary school fees abolition can you describe as success?
- Ndi magawo ati a kayendetsedwe ka sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila amene munganene kuti ndi chipambano?
- To what extent has the implementation of the secondary school fees abolition eased your financial burden on your children's education?
- Ndi mochuluka motani munganene kuti ndondomeko ya sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila ya kupepusani ku chipsinjo cholipilira maphunziro a mwana/ ana anu?
- Which penalties from school authorities do you receive from school authorities for not participating in development projects happening in school?
- Mumalandira chilango chotani ngati simunagwire nawo nchito ya chitukuko yochitika pa sukulu yanu?

- Besides the removed school fees, which other problems still make your child/ children absent from or drop out of school?
- Kumatula malipiro a sukulu omwe achotsedwawa, ndi mavuto ena ati amene amapangitsa mwana/ ana anu kujomba ku sukulu?
- What do you do to address problems that make your children drop out of school or absent from school in this era of school fees abolition?
- Mumatani pothetsa mavuto omwe amapangitsa mwana/ ana anu kusiya sukulu mu nthawi ino ya sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila?
- What challenges have you experienced in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition because you were not involved in the formulation and making of the policy?
- Ndi mavuto ati amene mwakumana nawo chifukwa choti simunatenga nawo mbali mu kukonza ndi kupanga ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale?
- What are other challenges of implementing secondary school fees abolition at your school?
- Ndi mavuto ena ati a kayendetsedwe ka ndondomeko ya sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila pa sukulu yanu?
- What do you do to address the challenges?
- Mumatani kuti muthetse mavuto amenewa?

C. HOW DO STAKEHOLDERS FEEL SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED?

- How would you describe the implementation of school fees abolition's ability to help your child/ children to have access to secondary education?
- Mungafotokoze motani za kuthekera komwe kayendetsedwe ka sukulu yosalipila yathandizira kuti mwana/ ana anu apeze mwayi wa maphunziro a sukulu ya sekondale?

- Which areas of the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be maintained?
- Ndi magawo ati a kayendetsedwe ka sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila omwe sayenera kusinthidwa?
- Which areas in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be improved?
- Ndi magawo ati a kayendetsedwe ka sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila ayenera akonzedwe bwino?
- Which areas of the implementation of secondary school fees abolition should be changed?
- Ndi magawo ati akayendetsedwe ka sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila ayenera kusinthidwa?
- If you were given chance to advise the government on the implementation of the secondary school fees abolition, what would be your suggestions?
- Mutapatsidwa mwayi wolangiza boma za kayendetsedwe ka ndondomekon ya sukulu ya sekondale yosalipila, mungaapereke maganizo otani?
- If you were engaged in the formulation and making of the policy what suggestions would you have whole-heartedly made regarding the nature and implementation of the policy change?
- Mukanapatsidwa mwayi wopanga nawo ndondomeko ya sukulu ya ulereyi mukanapereka maganizo otani a m'mene ndondomekoyi inayenera kukhalira komanso kuyendetsedwera?
- How would your being engaged in the formulation and making of the secondary school fees abolition have greatly helped the smooth implementation of the policy?
- Kutenga nawo mbali kwanu pa kukonza ndi kupanga ndondomeko ya sukulu ya ulereyi, zikanathandiza bwanji kuti ndondomekoyi ichitike mosavuta?

Appendix E: Learners

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR LEARNERS

SELF INTRODUCTION

I am Leston Nyambalo Adamson, a student from University of Malawi, a teacher at Thyolo Secondary School, pursuing Master of Education degree in Policy Planning and Leadership. As one of requirements for the degree, am conducting research entitled: **An Analysis of Education Key Stakeholders' Perspectives in the Implementation of Secondary School Fees Abolition in Malawi: A Case of Selected Schools in Shire Highlands Education Division**. This study intends to collect information about the implementation of the policy from key education stakeholders, the head teacher, the PTA, Parents and learners. Therefore, you being key education stakeholder, have been chosen purposely to give yours views on the subject. The research is not in any way political. The information you will provide will be treated as confidential and will be used solely for the academic purpose. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Place of interview

Date of interview

Time of interview

BIOGRAPHIC DATA OF INTERVIEWEES

What is the Name of your school?

What is the type your school (Boarding or Community Day Secondary School?)

A. WHAT ARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND ROLES OF EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- What do you know about school fees abolition?
- Mukudziwa chiani zokhuza ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale?
- What do you do to ensure that you remain in school as the school fees are removed?
- Mukuchita chiyani powonetsetsa kuti simukusiya sukulu pamene malipiro a sukulu achotsedwa?
- What else do you pay for having school fees removed?
- Mumalipiranso china chiyani pamene malipiro a sukulu achotsedwa?
- How do you get involved in development projects taking place at your school?
- Mumatenga nawo gawo motani pa nchito ya chitukuko yomwe imachitika pa sukulu yanu?
- How do you get involved in sending the feedback, on the progress of the implementation of secondary school fees abolition, to the division or ministry of education?
- Mumatenga nawo gawo motani potumiza zotsatira za m'mene ndondomeko yosalipila ya ku sekondale ikuyendera ku division kapena ku unduna wa maphunziro?
- How do you access the Ministry of Education's interpretation of your school's progress in implementing the school fees abolition?
- Mumakhala ndi mwayi wotani wopeza nawo zotsatira zimene unduna wa za maphunziro ukuonera m'mene sukulu yanu ikuchitira pa kayendetsedwe ka ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale?

B. WHAT DO EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE
AS SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES
ABOLITION?

- What can you describe as successes in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition?
- Munganenepo zinthu ziti monga chipambano pa kayendetsedwe ka sukulu ya ulere ya ku sekondale?
- What penalties do you receive for not participating in development projects happening at your school?
- Mumalandira chilango chanji pamene simumatenge nawo gawo pa ntchito za chitukuko zochitika pa sukulu yanu?
- To what extent has the implementation of secondary school fees abolition eased your parents' financial burden on your education?
- Ndongomeko ya sukulu ya ulere ya ku sekondale yapepusa motani makolo anu pa nkhani yolipira pa maphunziro anu?
- What challenges have you experienced in the implementation of secondary school fees abolition because of you were not involved in the formulation and making of the policy?
- Ndi mavuto ati amene mwakumana nawo chifukwa choti simumatenga nawo mbali mu kukonza ndi kupanga ndongomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale?
- What other challenges have you encountered in the implementation of the secondary school fees abolition?

- Ndi mavuto ena ati amene mwakumana nawo pa ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale

C. HOW DO KEY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS FEEL SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED?

- What suggestions can you give to the government as to how secondary school fees abolition should be implemented?
- Mungapereke maganizo otani ku boma pa momwe ndondomeko ya sukulu yosalipila ya ku sekondale inayenera kuyendetsedwera?
- If you were engaged in the formulation and making of the policy what suggestions would you whole-heartedly make regarding the nature and implementation of the policy change?
- Mukanapatsidwa mwayi wopanga nawo ndondomeko ya sukulu ya ulereyi mukanapereka maganizo otani a m'mene ndondomekoyi inayenera kukhalira komanso kuyendetsedwera?
- How would your being engaged in the formulation and making of the secondary school fees abolition have greatly helped the smooth implementation of the policy change?
- Mukanatenga nawo mbali pa kukonza ndi kupanga kwa ndondomeko ya sukulu yatsopanoyi, zikanathandiza bwanji kuti ndondomekoyi ichitike mosavuta?

Appendix: F. Document Analysis Guide

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION ABOUT THE DOCUMENT

What type of document is this?

When was it written?

Who wrote or spoke?

For whom was the document written?

Where was the document written?

Why was document written?

A. WHAT ARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND ROLES OF EDUCATION KEY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- What are parents required to do when the school asks for financial contributions whenever there is development project at the school?
- What are poor parents, with children in boarding secondary schools, required to do so that their children remain in school when they find boarding fees to too expensive for them?
- How should the school authorities coordinate with district councils so that parents should not be overwhelmed with much participation in development projects in schools?

B. WHAT DO KEY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE AS SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION?

- In what ways is the implementation of secondary school fees abolition beneficial to parents, learners and the nation?
- How can frequent contributions towards development projects in schools make implementation of secondary school fees abolition in Malawi unsuccessful?
- How can this challenge be addressed?
- How can boarding fees make implementation of Malawi's secondary school fees abolition unsuccessful?
- How can this challenge be addressed?

C. HOW DO EDUCATION KEY STAKEHOLDERS FEEL THE SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES ABOLITION SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED?

- How would students from poor families continue to be in school when they find boarding fees too expensive for them?
- How should school authorities and district councils coordinate to ensure that parents are not overwhelmed with development projects in schools in this era school fees abolition?

Appendix G: Letter of Authorization from the EDM, (SHED), to Carry out
Research in the Schools of the Division

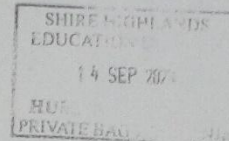
University of Malawi

Post Office Box 280

Zomba

14 September, 2023.

The Education Division Manager
Shire Highlands Education Division
Private Bag 7
Mulanje



Dear Madam

REQUESTING A LETTER OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY IN THE
DIVISION

I am Leston Adamson, a post graduate student at UNIMA and a teacher at Thyolo Secondary School. I am pursuing Master of Education in Policy Planning and Leadership.

I write to request you to grant me approval letter to conduct research study in some schools in this division. The title of my study is "An Analysis of the Implementation of Free Secondary Education Policy: Stakeholder Perspective".

I have attached a letter of introduction from the college.

Yours faithfully,

Leston Adamson.

10 SEP 11 11/11 CONCERN
Approved has been granted
to allow Leston Adamson
to conduct an Academic
Research in your institution
Kumbira
D.M.

Appendix H: Letter of Approval from UNIMAREC to Carry Out Research



VICE-CHANCELLOR
Prof. Samson Sajidu, BSc Mlw, MPhil Cantab, PhD Mlw

Our Ref: P.05/23/254

Your Ref:

1st September 2023

Mr Leston Adamson
Education Department
University of Malawi
P.O. Box 280
Zomba

Dear Mr Adamson

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE
P.O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi

Telephone: (265) 1 526 622
Fax: (265) 1 524 031
E-mail: vc@cc.ac.mw

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR
PROTOCOL NO. P.05/23/254. AN ANALYSIS OF FREE SECONDARY
EDUCATION POLICY IN MALAWI: KEY STAKEHOLDERS'
PERSPECTIVE.**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above-referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

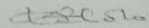
This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat.

Once the study is finalized, you are required to furnish the Committee and the Vice Chancellor with a final report of the study. The committee reserves the right to carry out a compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by

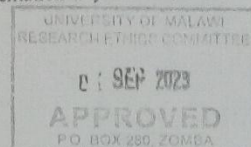
it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

UNIMAREC wishes you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Victoria Ndolo
CHAIRPERSON OF UNIMAREC



CC: Vice Chancellor
Registrar
Director of Finance and Investments
Acting Head of Research
UNIMAREC Administrator
UNIMAREC Compliance Officer