POLITICAL PARTIES AS CHANNELS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN MALAWI

M.A. (Political Science) Thesis

By

JACOB KALENGA JIMU
B.A. (Journalism) – University of Malawi

Submitted to the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Faculty of Social Science,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (Political Science)

MAY 2010
Master of Arts in Political Science
Chancellor College

DECLARATION

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

JACOB KALENGA JIMU

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Signature

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Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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

Signature_____Date_____

Blessings Chinsinga, (PhD)

Main Supervisor

Signature_____Date_____

Tiyesere Chikapa Jamali(Mrs) Deputy Head of Department

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the family of Pastor Eliah Kalenga Phiri of the Christ Citadel International Church. You gave me the reason to pursue my ambitions with hope. May the Lord continue to bless you abundantly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have come to fruition without the insightful guidance of my supervisor, Dr Blessings Chinsinga. The ‘panel beating’ might have seemed harsh but as they say, ends justify the means.

Let me also register huge thanks to my parents and relatives in Kasungu and Lilongwe for always being there for me as I laboured to reach this point. For making light of my rather precarious financial footing, the following friends, among many others, merit special mention: Maxwell Kazako, Henry Chilobwe, Hussein Madih, Ruth Lemani, Felix Malamula, Ellen Gwedeza, Mrs Theresa Chapulapula, Moffat Katundulu, Callisto Sekeleza, Phillip Chanza and Arthur Masina. To you all I say, may God’s rich blessings continue to shower over you.

Members of the three political parties, MCP, DPP and UDF, should feel my massive sense of gratitude for making this study possible.

To God the almighty, I say may the whole world sing your praises.

ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of political participation in Malawi through political parties using the case study of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the United Democratic Party (UDF) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The main focus of the study was to establish whether political parties in Malawi are viable linkage institutions that people can use to influence public policy making.

Understanding this dynamic is crucial because the main reason political parties exist in a democracy is to connect citizens with their government. Their performance in helping citizens influence government policies determines whether they are relevant actors in a democracy. But for parties to effectively connect people with their government, they need to be democratic by allowing their members to influence their policies. It is for this reason that this study sought to establish whether political parties in Malawi have the spaces that their members can use to influence their policies and, ultimately, government policies.

The study explored this area by investigating three dimensions of political participation: Decision making, level of activism at the local branches of political parties and the extent to which people at these local branches prioritise public policy issues at their meetings.

The research was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The data collection techniques used were focus group discussions (FGDs), a questionnaire survey and key informant interviews. FGDs and a questionnaire survey were used to collect data from ordinary party members while key informant interviews were utilised to engage experts and party leaders at constituency, district, regional and national levels.

The major argument the study advances on the basis of the findings is that political parties in Malawi are limited as linkage institutions as they do not offer their members adequate spaces which they can use to influence party and public policy making. The research established that people's participation is very low in key areas such as Parliament, the formulation and adoption of party manifestos and the decisions made at party conventions. The study also established that members do not participate actively in party activities at the local levels and that public policy issues are given low priority at the local meetings they hold.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADC:	Area Development Committee
DPP:	Democratic Progressive Party
FGDs:	Focus Group Discussions
MCP:	Malawi Congress Party
MP:	Member of Parliament
MPRSP:	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NEC:	National Executive Committee
PPM:	People's Progressive Movement
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
UDF:	United Democratic Front

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

This study proceeds from the argument that the main role that political parties play in democratic societies is to link citizens and their government. In other words, political parties serve as intermediaries between society and policy-makers (Scarrow 1967; Scarrow, 2005; Johari, 2005; Kadzamira *et al*, 1998). Johari (2005) contends that the main function of parties is "to create a substantive connection between rulers and the ruled." The thrust of the issue is that in a democracy, political parties act as forums through which people can influence government policy. Like Johari, Hague *et. al*, (1992, in Kadzamira *et. al*, 1998), also argues that the linkage function is the most important task of a political party. It is through this process that Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as "the government of the people, for the people and by the people" is given substance as public policy becomes a product of popular input. The point is that without strong and democratic political parties, the idea that democracy is about empowering citizens to influence government policies cannot be realised.

Somje (undated, in Johari, 2005) presents his formulation to explain the linkage function that political parties play. According to Somje, the first level of analysis is the

interest linkage which refers to the various forces in society that interact and articulate their respective interests. Political parties articulate programmes that balance the demands of such groups in order to win their support. Another level of linkage that Somje posits is the issue of normative linkages. The idea is that "shared normative perspectives provide necessary links between as well as within different systems (Johari, 2005)."

The last aspect of Somje's postulation on the issue is the idea of operational linkage, which looks at the linkages that parties sustain with society as a whole through the efforts of people like party activists who dedicate themselves to the task of sustaining such ties with the hope of getting rewards in the form of positions and status. Beyond all these formulations lies the issue of the connections that exist between citizens and those who make government policy. The issue is that policy making should be rooted in the broader societal aspirations. In this regard, political parties can play the crucial role of connecting society and policy-makers so that, by and large, citizens should advance their thinking on what government does. Parties can do this by opening up their decision making processes so that their members are able to influence the policies they make.

In articulating the concept of political linkage, Kellman (2004, in Matlosa, 2007) argues emphatically when she says that:

> "political parties serve as the primary link between government and society. As such, they have a unique role in fostering democratic governance and ensuring that it is responsive to societal needs. They help turn citizen interests and demands into policies and laws. If they fail this mission the whole democratic experiment can disintegrate."

According to McNaughton (1996), while interest groups can also play the role of linking citizens with government, political parties occupy a unique position to achieve this ideal since they form governments, control parliamentary voting and have constant channels of communication with both government and Parliament. This gives parties leverage over other players in a political system to engage policy makers on issues of interest to their members.

In her influential book on the concept of political linkage, Lawson (1980), puts forward four types of linkage performed by political parties. The first form of linkage advanced by Lawson is participatory linkage where parties serve as channels through which citizens can participate in government. This is achieved when parties create deliberate institutional structures through which their members can articulate their views on public policy issues. Closely related to participatory linkage is policy responsive linkage which involves parties acting as agencies for ensuring that government officials are responsive to the views of rank and file voters. On the other hand, in linkage by reward, parties serve as channels for the exchange of votes for favours. This is the kind of linkage that helps parties to mobilise people to vote for them or to support their position on issues by promising their members rewards for the support rendered. Finally, Lawson presents direct linkage where parties "are used by governments as aids to maintain coercive control over their subjects," (Lawson, 1980, in Schonfeld, 1983).

Direct linkage demonstrates the fact that political linkage is not a phenomenon of democratic governments only. In fact, parties in dictatorships maintain robust linkage systems so that they are able to mobilise support for government. The main feature of political linkage in democracies is that, ideally, parties serve as mechanisms that help

citizens and government to interact at a level where lines of influence go in both directions, meaning that both parties in the process are able to influence each other. More significantly, though, such systems enable citizens to keep their government in check with respect to the issue of public policy.

For the idea of political linkage to have any meaning in a polity, people should participate in the activities of political parties. The assertion is that people's participation in political party activities and decision making gives them the platform from which they can influence government policies (Scarrow, 2005). While studies conducted in Malawi by Afrobarometer in 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2008 present important dimensions on political participation in Malawi in general, none of them undertook an investigation of the dynamics of political participation through political parties. This leaves an important gap in the understanding of the process of political linkage in Malawi.

The study that focused exclusively on participation in political parties was conducted by Kadzamira *et al* (1998). All the eleven political parties polled in the survey indicated that they give their members the opportunity to influence party policies. The means cited by the parties that members use to influence party policies are:

(1) Verbal and written opinions sent to any party office and the president.

(2) Active participation in explaining the aims, policies and programmes of the party.

(3) Through campaigning, rallies and special meetings, and written questions and topics to any committee.

(4) Submission of policy recommendations, canvassing support and participation in debate at any level.

However, the problem, as the authors themselves acknowledged, was that the study did not conduct an independent verification of the parties' claims on the existence of these systems. In addition, there is no empirical study on the extent to which those structures, if they are there, actually help members to influence party policies (Kadzamira et. al., 1998). Against this backdrop, the study undertook an empirical assessment of the organisational systems in political parties to ascertain the extent to which they provide opportunities to their members to influence decision making in the parties.

The study analysed participation processes in political parties by focusing on party structures and decision making styles. On structures, the idea was to investigate whether local party systems are reliable mechanisms for members' participation in both local level and broad party policies. This was done by investigating the level of local party activism and the issues that dominate at the meetings members hold at this level. On decision making, the idea was to establish whether ordinary party members participate in the decisions their parties make at three crucial forums; Parliament, manifestos and party conventions.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Insights from the study are crucial in informing the discourse on whether political parties in Malawi are effective in connecting citizens with their government. The idea is that people's participation at the party level determines their ability to influence government policies. Since political parties are the most important institutions in a democracy (Lawson, 1980; McNaughton, 1996), understanding participation processes in these institutions acts as a barometer on the overall health of the country's democracy.

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which people participate in the activities and decisions in their political parties.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate agenda setting and decision-making processes in political parties.
2. To investigate whether members participate in party activities at their local branches.
3. Ascertain the extent to which public policy issues constitute the agenda at local party meetings.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology and data collection tools used in the study. The chapter also discusses the criteria used in identifying the political parties used as case studies for the study. It concludes by discussing the tool employed in analysing the data collected.

2.1 Research Design

This study was conceived and operationalised within the framework of the mixed-design research paradigm which combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Creswell, 1994; Sarantakov, 1997). The quantitative research paradigm is built around the idea that reality is objective and independent of the researcher and the focus is on statistical measures to discover the reality (Johnstone, 2004; Winsker, 2001). In contrast, the qualitative paradigm argues that "the only reality is that constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation…thus multiple realities exist in any given situation (Creswell 1994:5). In other words, the qualitative paradigm views reality as subjective. In addition, the focus of qualitative research is on understanding meanings,

experiences and beliefs and drawing recurring themes from the experience (Johnstone, 2004; Winsker, 2001).

The advantage of using a mixed-design research is that "any bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator and method would be neutralised when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators and methods," (Creswell, 1994:174). Sarantakov (1997) presents the following advantages of a mixed design: To attain a variety of information on the same issue; to use the strengths of each method to overcome the deficiencies of the other; to achieve a higher degree of validity and to overcome the deficiencies of single-method studies.

2.2 Study Arena and Data Collection Tools

The study was conducted using three political parties as case studies. These parties are the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The three parties were identified as case studies for the research using the following criteria: (1) The party should have existed for at least three years (2) It should have contested in at least one presidential or parliamentary election (3) The party should also have a minimum of five MPs in Parliament. These standards were applied to ensure that there is a reasonable chance that a party being studied has structures that can be used for analysis. Using these criteria, UDF, DPP, MCP and People's Progressive Party (PPM) qualified for inclusion into the study. Out of the four, the DPP was purposively picked to help the study pursue the issue of whether people view the fact that their MP is in government or opposition as a crucial issue with regard to their ability to influence public policy. Apart from the foregoing, MCP and

UDF were chosen because they have been in existence for a relatively long time than the rest of the parties in the country and could provide insights on the issue of whether a party's longevity has a bearing on its members' participation in party activities at the local level.

The choice of constituencies was determined on the basis of a party's level of support derived from the last elections it participated in. This support should have translated into the party winning the seat in the constituency. The issue of support was arrived at to ensure that there is a reasonable possibility that the party has developed structures it uses to interact with its members at the constituency level. Considerations of accessibility to the researcher also had a bearing on the choice of constituencies. On the basis of these criteria, Zomba Thondwe (DPP) Blantyre City West (UDF) and Lilongwe Mpenu (MCP) were purposively sampled to form the action arenas for the research.

The research used both qualitative and quantitative instruments for data collection and analysis. The following sections discuss the different data collection techniques applied for this study, including the rationale for doing so.

2.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants in the three political parties, from constituency to national leaders. Using interview guides afforded the researcher the opportunity to make follow up and probing questions to elicit more and richer responses from the interviewees. Another advantage was that this gave the researcher the platform to refine the questions within the theme or study objectives if the responses were not addressing the broad objective of the study (Pennings, 2006).

At the constituency level, at least two members of the constituency committee and the incumbent MP[1] were interviewed to gain insights into the level of activism in their areas, the nature of issues that constitute the agenda at party meetings in area and their understanding of decision making processes in the wider party. The ideas gleaned from constituency leaders acted as a bouncing board for the claims made at the higher echelons of the party, particularly on issues that touch on constituencies. For district, regional and national leaders, the aim of interviewing them was mainly to understand decision making processes in the party, especially with respect to party manifestos, Parliament and convention.

Table 1: Summary of Political Party Key Informants

Party	National	Regional	District	Constituency	Total
DPP	2	3	2	4	11
MCP	5	3	2	3	13
UDF	2	5	3	2	12
Total	9	11	7	9	36

2.2.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions refer to interviews conducted with a group of people specifically selected owing to their particular interests, expertise or position in the community to collect information on a number of issues (Sarantakov, 1997.) This method of data collection "is primarily a way of gaining information in a short period of time

[1] The UDF MP for Blantyre City West Bertha Masiku was not interviewed because she was continually unavailable for interviews.

about the breath or variation of opinions and establishing a mechanism of group formation," (Sarantakov, 1997: 181).

Focus group discussions were conducted with ordinary party members at the constituency level. The purpose of holding FGDs was to gain insights into issues of political activism in terms of the participation of ordinary members in the activities of their parties at the branch, area and constituency levels. Related to the above, the study also sought to understand the issues that take precedence at the meetings party members hold in their branches, areas and constituencies. The FGDs were also done to gauge people's knowledge of and participation in crucial forums like conventions, Parliament and manifestos.

Nine FGDs were conducted in the three constituencies sampled, three in each constituency. The administrative divisions the parties devised were used as a basis for selecting sites for the FGDs. For the DPP Thondwe constituency, which is divided into five wards, three wards were picked and one FGD was held in each ward. The same principle was applied to UDF Blantyre City West constituency where one FGD was conducted in each of the three zones identified. With respect to MCP, whose Lilongwe Mpenu constituency is divided in terms of areas, the study grouped the areas into three zones, with each zone making up a third of the areas. One FDG was conducted in each of the zones.

2.2.3 Questionnaire Survey

According to Creswell (1994), the survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of some fraction of the population. The data "enables a researcher to

generalise the findings from a sample of responses to a population," (Creswell 1997: 118). The questionnaire survey, using one-on-one interviews with ordinary party members at a constituency level, was administered in order to effectively capture variables that FGDs could not adequately reflect. These variables were those to do with individuals members' knowledge and views on a wide range of issues like manifesto, Parliament, conventions, functions of political parties and the question of whether the fact that their MPs are in government or opposition affects their influence on public policy. Some of these issues were raised at the FGDs but the individual interviews provided another prism for examining the issues since FGDs, however perfect they might be, cannot always elicit the best responses from individual members.

To do this, thirty ordinary members were interviewed in each of the three constituencies, taking the figure to 90 for the whole survey. Since parties in Malawi do not have registers for their members, respondents were identified through snowball sampling where a member was asked to direct the researcher to another party member they know. Due to reasons of practicability, it was not possible to sample 30 percent of the population in the three constituencies. Limitations in terms of finances and time meant that figures beyond 30 per constituency were not achievable.

2.2.4 Desk Research

Desk research was employed to understand background issues to the study. It centred on the review of official party documents such as constitutions and manifestos. The study also reviewed newspaper clippings on party conventions and other issues under examination.

2.3 Data Analysis

Two methods for processing the data were used: Content analysis and SPSS application. Content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, themes or any message that can be communicated (Mouton, 2005). Content analysis was used to pick out the major themes emerging from FGDs and key informant interviews. For quantitative data collected through the questionnaire survey, SPSS was used to process it. The elements tracked were frequencies on such variables like people's participation at local party meetings, issue dominance at such meetings and whether people feel they are consulted on party issues.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the concept of political participation which lies at the heart of the study. It is through political participation that the idea of political linkage performed by political parties is operationalised. The chapter begins by discussing the theoretical underpinnings of the idea of political participation. This provides the theoretical basis on which the rest of the discussion on the concept is built. The next section of the chapter tackles the empirical dimension of political participation by discussing political participation in Malawi. This discussion has relied extensively on Afrobarometer studies conducted in 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2008. These studies shed important light on the extent to which people in Malawi participate in public life.

The Afrobarometer, an independent joint project of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP), conducts a comparative series of public attitude surveys in Africa, covering 20 countries on the continent. The surveys investigate citizen attitudes towards, among other areas, democracy, civil society and markets (Afrobarometer, 2008). The project began in 1999.

3.1 Political Participation: A theoretical Exploration

In discussing the concept of political participation, Gaventa (2006) asserts that "the best way to tap into the energy of society is through 'co-governance,' which involves inviting social actors to participate in the core activities of the state." Gaventa's argument is that meaningful participation empowers citizens and elevates them to the status of co-managers of public policy issues. Seyd and Whiteley (2002) echo Gaventa's view by arguing that citizen participation is at the core of democratic politics. Harrigan (1991) goes further to argue that for citizens to become co-managers of state affairs, there must be channels through which they can influence government policies. These channels are political parties, Parliament and civil society organisations, among others. Hart (1972:612) put it emphatically when he contended that:

> "As the quality of the individual citizen is devalued, the quality of public policy will decline. Thus, while maximal citizen participation will not improve the quality of public policy immediately, one does learn by doing, and over time the quality of citizen participation will increase, which will then lead to qualitatively better policy decisions."

However, key as political participation may be as a pillar of democracy, pinning down what it actually means, how it can be achieved and how far it can be pursued as a democratic value are contentious issues among scholars. Seyd and Whiteley (2002) acknowledge this fact when they argue that although the democratic credo is that government ought to be run by the people, "…the issue is, how much and what kind of citizen participation is necessary for democratic government?"

Verba (1967) defines political participation as acts that are intended to influence the behavior of those empowered to make public decisions. Seyd and Whiteley (2002) add an important dimension to Verba's definition by saying that political participation not only enables citizens to influence the policies that the state pursues but also empowers them to influence the selection of the people who make those policies. Harrigan (1991), Mansbridge (2006) and Janda et al (2006) share Seyd and Whiteley's understanding of the concept, namely, that the process gives people the power to influence both the composition of the personnel that runs government and the policies they implement.

Scaff (1975:448) also highlights an important element of participation when he argues that participation involves more than voting and that it includes "playing an active, though not necessarily direct, role in community decisions." According to Janda et al (2006), political participation does not only seek to influence the selection of government personnel and the policies they pursue, but it also intends to shape the conduct of politics in general. This is an important addition to the understanding of the concept because there are some forms of political participation that are not linked to particular government policies like raising the national flag and singing the national anthem.

Verba (1967) isolates several elements that lie at the centre of the idea of political participation. One of the ideas he picks out is that those who engage in this process are driven by the intention to shape the thinking and actions of those mandated to make decisions. According to Verba, participation is a goal-oriented activity in the sense that people have concrete targets that they want to achieve by exerting influence on public officials.

However, the argument that political participation is a concretely goal-oriented activity has been criticised by other scholars. For example, Lawrence (1981**)** argues that people may participate in an activity for its own sake without seeking concrete goals. To advance his argument, Lawrence presents two forms of participation; instrumental participation and expressive participation. According to Lawrence, instrumental participation is a goal-oriented process in the sense that it is intended to influence government to implement particular public policies or to solve political problems that concern the participants. On the other hand, expressive participation is undertaken because doing so is inherently rewarding. For example, people may participate in a demonstration because it is exciting or offers an opportunity to interact with other like-minded individuals. One finds Lawrence's arguments on the issue more persuasive because not all people are rational that they always do things to attain a clearly definable objective.

Verba also says that the definition of political participation does not include what he calls 'support' or 'ceremonial' participation like when people demonstrate to support particular government decisions because political participation is aimed at influencing public officials to toe a particular line of action, not showing sympathy for a decision already made. However, Janda et al (1989) take a different view on this issue. To them, support for government polices also constitutes political participation. This is a more reasonable position than Verba's because even supporting a government policy is a form of influencing its thinking since it reinforces the philosophy or rationale behind the policy and signals that future policies along the same line are acceptable, at least to those supporting them.

Another issue that Verba highlights in his conceptualisation of participation is that the process is not limited to the electoral process, meaning that elections are not an end in themselves but rather a process that creates a broad architecture for both the legitimacy of government and an environment where people can participate in public policy. This position is also supported by Nie et al (1972), Harrigan (1991), Janda et al (2006), Seyd and Whiteley (2002) and Magolowondo (2007). According to Magolowondo (2007) "…although regular, competitive, free and fair elections are central to democracy, this is not enough. Mechanisms have to be put in place to ensure that at all time, especially between elections, the people's interests are given paramount attention."

Another element worth discussing in Verba's formulation is the issue of the conditions that affect participation. He argues that the possibility that people will participate is contingent on issues of resources, the motivation to participate and the conduciveness of the social structure in which they live. Verba divides resources into three dimensions; intellectual, material and social resources. With respect to intellectual resources, Verba says the availability of information and the skills to utilise it enhances the possibility that one will participate and the prospect of the process being successful. The same argument also applies to money since participating in an activity can be costly and such resources help to facilitate the process. By social connections, Verba refers to societal networks into which one is embedded in terms of the people one relates to and interacts with. The assertion is that the people that surround you can provide the motivation, resources and connections that one can utilise to influence decision makers. However, Verba argues that one may have the resources but may not be motivated enough to participate in political processes. The issue here is that for somebody to

participate in an activity, they should have the confidence that the process will yield the results they desire, thus the activity must be perceived by the participant to be effective.

Beyond the environment surrounding the individual like resources and motivation, Verba argues that there are structural factors that affect the process of participation. Structural factors refer to the availability or absence of the channels through which people can participate. These structures relate to both the laws guiding the political system and the institutions that enable people to engage with government. If the laws are permissive, people have the spaces they can use to participate in political processes like elections and public policy. In addition, the quality of structures in institutions like civil society organisations, legislatures and political parties can also enhance or impede people's participation in public policy issues. This point is also supported by Harrigan (1991) who says that mobilising organisations tend to operate in upper status areas, a situation that disadvantages the poor. This is particularly relevant to Malawi where a common refrain against civil society organisations is that they are predominantly urban-based and elitist (Chinsinga, 2007).

Harrigan also presents system non-responsiveness as a barrier to participation. The argument is that in countries where governments are not responsive to people's demands, citizens tend to develop a sense of inadequacy or, in political science language, they have a low sense of political efficacy. In such environments, people feel that they do not have the capacity to influence political outcomes, hence they shun politics altogether. To complete the equation, Verba asserts that to understand the dynamics of participation, it is also important to examine the factors that might impede or facilitate the process of participation from the point of view of the decision makers. On this front, he presents

resources and structural conduciveness as the key factors that influence policy makers to be responsive or resistant to public influence. His argument is that if a decision maker is not dependent on the participants for resources like money, position and information he is more likely to be autonomous than responsive (Verba, 1967). The implication of this assertion is that elected officials like Members of Parliament are more likely to be responsive to public opinion than civil servants because the former depend directly on the people's vote for survival. In practice, though, this thesis is questionable as the case of Malawi has shown where MPs are more accountable to their parties than the electorate.

The structural factors that affect participation from the perspective of the participants also apply to decision makers. The legal framework in a country may be permissive to the participants but highly prescriptive to the decision makers, thereby creating a disjuncture between the expectations of the citizens and the room available to the decision makers to respond to public opinion. In the case of Malawi, the laws generally create room for people to participate in public policy issues although the arenas that can help people to achieve this, like civil society organizations, are generally impaired (Chirwa, 2003).

3.2 Theories of Political Participation

Many theories have been advanced to explain political participation. Out of the many theories that are there, three ones will be discussed to highlight how they illuminate on political participation that the study seeks to undertake.

3.2.1 Civic Voluntarism Model

This theory of political participation posits that the resources one possesses (money, time and civic skills), psychological engagement with politics and social networks have a huge bearing on whether one will participate and the possibility that the process will succeed. Verba and Nie (1972) argue that an individual's social status—in terms of job, education and income—determines to a large extent how much one participates. On the issue of education, Nie et al (1972), Milbrath (1971) are more emphatic when they say that it is the most important variable that influences participation. The issue is not that education, of and by itself, is a motivator for participation, but that it provides people with the means, resources and social networks that enable them to take part in acts of political participation.

Pettersen and Rose (1996) support the model by arguing that upper status people tend to participate more in politics than poor people because political participation generally requires political resources, which are more readily available to those in the higher socio-economic category. They also argue that apart from the issue of resources, the affluent "have a higher stake in the outcomes of the political system and hence may be more prone to exert efforts to influence political decisions" (Pettersen and Rose, 1996). These stakes may be business and other interests that the well off might try to safeguard through their participation in politics. Of course, the observation that upper socio status people generally participate more in politics than the poor raises an important paradox in that if the poor are most in need of benefits from government and if political participation seems to be the surest way of attaining those benefits, why then do they tend to be passive in

political activities? The issues of resources and system unresponsiveness could be some of the factors that explain this phenomenon.

Without making reference to specific studies, Harrigan (1991) and Seyd and Whiteley (2002) argue that studies on political participation in the United States and other Western countries show a strong linkage between individual socio-economic characteristics and political participation as low participation rates are predominantly found among the poor, "who normally do not belong to formal organizations and are less or not educated," (Harrigan, 1991:22). However, Pettersen and Rose, (1996) report that studies undertaken in Norway in 1990 and 1993 on local political participation found that there was no correlation between political activity and individual socio-economic characteristics.

Despite its prominence in the literature on political participation, the civic voluntarism model has been criticised on a number of fronts. One of the major criticisms is that it fails to explain why large numbers of high status individuals do not participate in politics. For example, in the United States of America, where there is a large population of high status people, voting participation has been declining steadily over the years (Brody, 1978; Putman, 1995; Miller and Shanks, 1996, in Whiteley and Seyd, 2002). Another weakness of the model is that it dwells on the supply side of the equation by focusing on resources, but fails to explain why individuals have a demand for participation in terms of the incentives that drive them to participate in politics.

Harrigan (1991) also notes that the socioeconomic model fails to explain fully the contacting of local or state officials about neighborhood problems, especially in communities with serious problems. According to Harrigan, in such communities, people of high socioeconomic status are just as likely as others to take their complaints to public

officials. The implication of Harrigan's argument is that the resources model dwells more on higher forms of political participation like campaigning, running for political office and influencing broad public policy issues.

These weaknesses notwithstanding, the theory is still relevant in explaining political participation, especially on the issue of resources. The relatively higher political participation, through demonstrations and other acts, that takes place in urban areas in Malawi could be attributed to the fact that people in these areas have relatively more resources like information and skills to engage in political activities than those living in the rural areas.

3.2.2 Rational Choice Model

The rational choice theory of political participation holds that people participate in collective political activities because they are driven by the considerations of self-interest (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002). In essence, this means that there are goals that people intend to achieve by participating in politics. But like the civic voluntarism model, the rational choice theory also faces some major challenges. The main weakness highlighted against the model is that it faces what is called the "paradox of participation" in the sense that "rational actors will not participate in collective action to achieve common goals because the products of such collective action are public goals," (ibid). The issue here is that if public goods can be accessed by everyone, including those that did not contribute to their provision, why should one be motivated to participate in attaining them? A rational actor would rather be a free rider than a participant because free riding gives them as much

public goods as those that they would have accessed had they participated in their provision.

3.2.3 The Mobilisation Model

The mobilisation model presents political participation as a product of opportunities. Its thesis is that people participate in response to the political opportunities in their environment and to stimuli from other people (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002). These opportunities are linked to the issue of resources advanced by the civic voluntarism model "since individuals with high socioeconomic status are more likely to have access to political parties, interest groups or campaign organisations than are low status individuals because these institutions are more likely found in areas where high status individuals live," (Ibid).

Like the civic volunteerism model, the major weakness of the theory is that it puts too much premium on resources as the key factor that influences political participation. The question is, if resources constitute the key explanatory variable on why some people participate in politics and others don't, why is it that some people who have the resources do not take part in political activities? In the same vein, why do some people who are short of resources participate in politics? This means the exclusive focus on resources is flawed.

3.2.4 General Incentive Model

The essence of the general incentive theory is that individuals need incentives to participate in politics but that there is need to consider a wide array of incentives than the narrowly defined individual incentives that other models articulate. On the scope of incentives that motivate people to participate in politics, the theory presents three types of incentives: process, outcome and ideological. According to Whiteley and Seyd (2002), process incentives "refer to motives for participating that derive from the process of participation." For example, as Tullock (1971) says, some people participate in a revolution because of the entertainment value that the occasion presents or the need to release pent up emotions (Opp, 1990).

On the other hand, outcome incentives are concerned with the private returns from participation in terms of developing one's political career as an elected representative of a political party. The idea is that some people participate in party activities as a way of creating the ground for them to win a seat in the legislature as an MP of their political party. In contrast, ideological incentives motivate people to participate in politics because politics provides them with an arena where they can interact with people who share their ideological leanings (Ibid).

The incentives that are concerned with the achievement of private goals are called selective outcome incentives. The theory also articulates what are called collective incentives, which dwell on attaining collective goods. According to Whiteley and Seyd (2002), collective incentives can be positive or negative. The argument is that people can participate in politics to promote the values and ideas of their political parties (positive incentives) or to oppose the ideas of other parties and individuals (negative incentives).

3.3 Political Participation: Virtue or Vice?

Although political participation has been widely presented as an important ingredient in a democratic setting, the idea has its sceptics. For example, Cook and Kothari, (2001, in Gaventa, 2006), contend that participation can become a "new tyranny itself," in the sense that public opinion sometimes pigeon-hole policy makers into a tight corner, so much so that they might be forced to ignore the technical considerations on issues and bend towards popular opinion. Others like Cornwell and Coelho, (2004), argue that the process can also be captured by the elites who may use the masses as a front for legitimising their positions or views.

The position of this study is that in spite of its downside, participation is a key feature of a democratic society. The argument by Verba (1967) that participation empowers people to determine their own destiny buttresses the idea that there cannot be genuine democracy without participation. Another important issue on which this study takes a clear position is that the focus of the study is on what is called high-intensity political participation. This is the kind of participation that takes time and effort on the part of those involved like attending meetings, fundraising as well as seeking and achieving elected office (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002). This kind of political participation is impossible…

> "…without institutions since individuals acting alone cannot change government policies. To effect this change actors need an institutional framework within which collective action can be organised. Creating the cooperative behaviour that underpins collective action requires actors to have a stable set of expectations about each other and this can only be fostered in institutions," (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002:2).

The statement above underscores the pivotal role that institutions such as political parties play in facilitating, promoting and coordinating political participation. However, the idea is not that by and of themselves institutions help link people with government. On the contrary, the argument is that for these institutions to be meaningful as actors in democracy, they should be democratic themselves by allowing the people they represent to influence their decisions and policies.

3.4 Political Participation in Malawi

Literature on political participation in Malawi presents a mixed picture. While participation in elections is generally high (Tsoka 2002, Khaila and Nthinda, 2006), inter-election participation is generally low. From the point of view of elections, the 1993 referendum registered a voter turnout of 69 percent. The figure rose by over 10 percent in the 1994 general elections where 80 percent of the registered voters cast their ballots. There was a further rise in the 1999 elections with a 90 percent turnout. However, the turnout declined by about 30 percent in the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections which registered a voter turnout of 59 percent. The drop in 2004 has been attributed to such factors as confusion created by the last minute change in the polling date, problems encountered with registration rolls and frustrations with unfulfilled promises that politicians made in the previous elections, (Khaila and Nthinda, 2006).

However, although there was such a big drop, it must be borne in mind that on average over 60 percent of registered voters have turned out in the four major elections that the country has held since the turn of the 1990s. In addition, there has been a progressive increase in voter registration from 3,775,256 in 1994 to 5,071,822 in 1999 to

5,184,086 in 2004 (Khaila and Nthinda, 2006). The only blight was the 2000 local government elections where a paltry 14 percent of the registered voters cast their ballots. This generally high level of participation in elections could be a result of the fact that elections are a low-intensity form of participation which does not require a lot of effort and resources to take part in (Seyd and Whitely, 2002). In contrast, as the following discussion shows, other forms of political participation that take place during the inter-election period fall under high-intensity participation which requires high level of initiative and resources to undertake. The discussion now turns to this area.

3.4.1 Inter-election Participation in Malawi

The point of departure for this analysis is the investigation of the phenomenon of cognitive engagement or the basic mental engagement with politics in terms of whether people have passion for politics (Khaila and Mthinda, 2006). The 1999 Afrobarometer survey revealed that only about 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they were "very interested" in public affairs. In the 2003 Afrobarometer study, this figure rose quite substantially with about 85 percent of the interviewees saying that they are "very interested" in public affairs. In the 2005 study, the figure dropped to 74 percent. The 2008 survey registered quite a substantial drop on this area, with only 39 percent of the respondents indicating to be "very interested" in public affairs.

In terms of participation in different activities that people do in a democracy, the 1999 survey found that the major activity that people engage in is attending political rallies, with 72 percent of the respondents indicating to have participated at least once the previous year. About 38 percent of these said they had done so frequently. This contrasts

with other forms of participation like addressing a community or national issue where 41 percent said they had taken part in such initiatives, with only 17 percent of these having done so frequently.

According to Tsoka (2002), such low levels of participation in activities that matter could be a result of people's perceptions of their ability to affect their own lives or politics in general. The fact that they are more likely to attend political rallies where information is generally one way could be a manifestation of the fact that they feel that their voice would not make a difference (Tsoka, 2002). Given the thirty-year MCP dictatorial rule during which people were viewed more as subjects than citizens, this apparent apathy towards more substantive forms of participation is not very surprising.

The 1999, 2005 and 2008 Afrobarometer studies also found that discussion of politics is not a major pre-occupation among Malawians. According to the 1999 study, 45 percent of the respondents reported that they discuss politics with friends or relatives only occasionally. This figure dropped to 30 percent in the 2005 study but rose to 41 percent in the 2008 survey. According to the 1999 survey, 36 percent of the people polled indicated that they never even discuss politics, while the figure rose by about 10 percent in the 2005 survey where about 46 percent of the respondents said they never discuss politics at all. Things improved slightly in 2008 when 41 percent of the respondents said they never discuss politics at all.

For the 1999 survey, only 19 percent of the respondents indicated that they discuss politics regularly. This variable registered a marginal increase of 5 percent in 2005 when those who discuss politics regularly constituted about 23 percent of the respondents. There was a further increase on this dimension in 2008 as 27 percent of those polled said

they discuss politics frequently. It is important to note that although successive studies registered an increase in the number of people who discuss politics regularly, the overall picture is still far from satisfactory.

On the basis of these studies, it is clear that discussion of politics does not constitute a major pre-occupation among Malawians. The general pattern, as shown by the two studies, has been a fall in the level of political discussion among Malawians. Another area that presents some concerns, at least in the context of the country's democracy, is the issue of what actions people would take if government does something they consider wrong or harmful. As many as 67 percent of the respondents in the 1999 survey said they would never engage in a demonstration, while a whopping 73 percent said they would never take part in boycotts of rates, services or taxes. In addition, 84 percent of the respondents said they would never participate in sit-ins, disruptions of government meetings or offices, while 90 percent said they would never use force or violent actions like damaging property. As Tsoka (2002) states, this raises serious questions about people's willingness to defend democracy if it is under threat. This becomes more apparent in people's response to the question of what they would do if government engages in undemocratic actions like shutting down critical media institutions or banning political parties. Although the majority indicated that they would oppose such actions, in terms of the specific actions that they would take, the majority said they would do nothing.

Political participation is the most important tool for influencing the actions of government, but when people appear to shun the process, as the Afrobarometer studies have shown, questions must be asked about whether Malawians really understand the

fundamentals of this form of government. Perhaps the issue of an inadequate sense of political efficacy could provide some explanation for this finding. The issue could be that people do not feel that their actions would matter to government and political leaders in general. The same argument could also provide an explanation on why Malawians in general do not engage with their leaders. In the 1999 survey, 91 percent of the respondents said they had never contacted a government or political party official during the previous year, 5 percent had contacted such officials only once or twice, 2 percent had done so a few times, with only 1 percent saying they were in frequent contact with their leaders. The study also showed that about 52 percent of those who made contacts had approached their MP, while 23 percent had contacted political party officials. About 24 percent had contacted other influential people, albeit only infrequently, with the majority of these having contacted church leaders (13 percent) and traditional leaders (9 percent).

However, the 2005 study shows significant improvement in this area. The study found that 47 percent indicated that they had made no contact with leaders the previous year, a huge improvement from the 1999 Afrobarometer survey. Out of those who made contacts, about 35 percent had contacted church officials or traditional leaders, almost a triple rise for church officials and close to a quadruple increase for traditional leaders. About 18 percent had contacted councillors, followed by party officials at 14 percent, Members of Parliament (11 percent), other influential people (11 percent) and government officials (9 percent).

The study also showed that Malawians contact leaders principally to tell them about community or public problem, as evidenced by 60 percent of those who had made

contacts or 32 percent of all people. On the other hand, 29 percent of those who made contacts did so to tell leaders about their personal problems, while 3 percent of those who made contacts contacted an influential person to present their views on political issues.

The picture emerging from the findings that an overwhelming majority of the people who contact their leaders do so to report community problems, while not very surprising given that such issues are closer to the people than national issues, raises some concerns. What this means is that Malawians do not participate a lot in high value political and public policy issues, those issues that usually generate high stakes for political and policy actors and have relatively broader implications than local or community issues.

This confinement to community issues could be attributed to the finding of the 2005 study that the majority of the respondents indicated that given an opportunity they would participate more in government and political issues. Such opportunities could be provided by linkage institutions like political parties and civil society organisations. Studying the dynamics of party politics, especially in terms of their decision making and representational abilities, is, therefore, a critically important endeavour as a way of understanding the threats and opportunities that exist in the parties as bridges between citizens and their government.

3.5 Political Participation in Political Parties: Candidate Selection

It is widely acknowledged that candidate selection is one of the major functions of political parties and a key hallmark of the test of their democratic credentials (Cross, 2008; Scarrow, 2006; Field and Siavelis, 2008). Schattschneider (1942: 101, in Cross, 2008), argued that “the nominating process has become the crucial process of the party.

He who can make the nominations is the owner of the party." Gallagher (1988: 1) also asserted that "the way in which political parties select their candidates may be used as an acid test of how democratically they conduct their internal affairs."

According to Field and Siavelis (2008), candidate selection refers to ..."the predominantly extralegal process by which a political party decides which of the persons legally eligible to hold an elective public office will be designated on the ballot and in election communications as its recommended and supported candidate or list of candidates." The two authors posit that recent studies on candidate selection show that in many advanced industrial democracies, the process has become more inclusive, as more people are getting involved in selecting their parties' candidates for elections. Bille (2001, in Field and Siavelis, 2008) found that only 16 percent of western European parties used membership ballots for the final decision on candidate selection in 1960, while 23 percent did so by 1989.

Hague and Harrop (2001:170) express the same point when they say that "many parties now afford their ordinary members a greater voice in candidate selection than was once the case." Field and Siavelis (2008) outline six key aspects of candidate selection. One of the dimensions of the process is the degree to which it is legally regulated or privately controlled by the parties themselves. A second aspect, closely related to the first, relates to candidacy requirements in terms of the party rules and/or laws governing who can become a candidate.

The third aspect is the degree of centralisation versus decentralisation of the process. This aspect is divided into two strands: Territorial and functional. Territorial decentralisation relates to "whether candidate selection takes place at the national,

regional or constituency/local level, and, if at multiple levels, the relative importance of each," (Field and Siavelis, 2008). On the other hand, functional decentralisation refers to mechanisms that allow the participation of groups such as women, the aged and labour.

The fourth element is the inclusiveness of the process and the degree of participation in it. The question is who participates in selecting candidates for elections? The people nominating candidates can range from all members of the party to the party leader or a small group of party elites. As Scarrow (2006) says, the issue of who participates in the process is a hotly contested area. While one school of thought argues that the more people are involved in the process, the more internally democratic the party is, other contend that opening up the arena to everybody could actually disempower the majority of party members and strengthen the position of party leaders. The point is that involving the bulk of party members may weaken the position of the more informed party activists, a situation that party leaders can manipulate by taking advantage of people's ignorance to entrench their positions.

As Field and Siavelis (2008: 630) contend, "a more inclusive selectorate can also come at the cost of undermining intermediate party activists and thereby leaving party leaders better able to achieve their goals and to manipulate less informed and atomized selectors." The case of the Green Party in Germany (Table ...), though not necessarily on candidate selection, demonstrates the dangers of involving all and sundry in making decisions on party issues.

Another element of candidate selection that Field and Siavelis (2008) highlight is the voting or appointment system used to choose the candidate. This relates to the actual

device that determines the winner of the contest. Finally, the last aspect relates to the degree to which the process is institutionalised or patronage oriented.

Case study 1: Party Primaries in Argentina

In 1983, Argentina overthrew its military dictatorship and re-established an electoral democracy. One of the early acts of the newly elected Congress was the 1985 adoption of a Parties Law requiring parties to have formal rules for internal governance and to use democratic elections to fill party-leadership posts. The Parties Law does not require parties to use primaries to select candidates. Yet parties have increasingly turned to this method to select candidates for state and national elections, although the methods that respective parties have used vary from election to election. Most parties limit participation in their party-run primaries to registered members, though some open them up not only to party members but also to those unaffiliated with other parties.—*Extracted from Scarrow (2006).*

Case study 2: The Green Party in Germany: The perils of too much intra-party democracy?

Formally founded as a political party in 1980, the Green Party in Germany emerged out of the milieu shaped by the social-protest movements of the 1970s. From the beginning, the party was committed to developing a new organizational style, one that left as much power as possible with the "grassroots," and in which the party's officeholders were subordinate to the party, and not vice versa. One early manifestation of these principles was the widespread use of party meetings to set party policies on various issues. Such meetings, generally held on a local or regional level, were often open to all party supporters, not just paid-up party members. Given that only a small proportion of party members would attend these meetings, it was not unusual to have a small group of committed individuals push through resolutions that were unrepresentative of (or even embarrassing to) the wider party. After several years of experience with this, state Green parties mostly changed their rules to place less weight on all-member meetings, and more on delegate conventions. They also began to exclude non-members from decision making.—*Extracted from Scarrow (2006).*

3.5.1 Candidate Selection in US political Parties

Candidate selection processes in US political parties exemplify the complexity of the American political system in general. While primary elections are the dominant mode of nominating candidates for elections (Harrigan 1996; Janda *et al*, 1998), there are variations across states on how decisions are made on who stands in elections. What is clear is that in America, decisions on candidates for elections are not the exclusive

preserve of political parties alone as state governments enact their own laws to govern the process.

However, in spite of the differences across states on candidate selection procedures, party conventions and primary elections are the principal modes for conducting the process (Harrigan, 1996). The system operates in such a way that both conventions and primary elections are used to determine the candidate. For example, if no candidate receives enough votes to secure endorsement at the convention or if the losing candidate feels he can do better in the primary, the battle moves from the convention to the primary elections. Conventions are the principal means through which American parties nominate presidential candidates. According to Hague and Harrop (2001), delegates to the convention are selected through primary elections open to all registered supporters of the parties.

There are two major types of primaries conducted in America: Open and closed primaries. In open primaries, which are conducted in nine states, anyone can vote, regardless of party affiliation. As Harrigan (1996) argues, this system enables members of other parties to vote for the weakest candidate in the primaries, thereby enhancing their candidate's chances of winning in the general elections. In contrast, in closed primaries, a system practised in 38 states, only those certified as party members and supporters are allowed to vote.

Another variant of primaries is the blanket primary, used in Alaska and Washington. Under this system, a voter receives a ballot listing all the political parties, enabling him to nominate candidates of different parties to different offices. Under non-partisan primary

elections, used in Louisiana, the party labels of the candidates are not listed on the ballot. The top two candidates become nominees for the general elections (Harrigan, 1996).

Although generally Americans participate in selecting candidates for general elections, there is a paradox in that there is growing disenchantment with the responsiveness of US parties (Janda et al., 1998). This demonstrates the argument that people's participation at the party level does not necessarily translate into strong influence on public policies. This is why the issue of representation becomes crucial, particularly in a representative democracy such as the US. This problem notwithstanding, America provides an ideal example of participatory democracy.

3.6 Theoretical Framework

3.6.1 The Agency Theory of Political Representation

In a representative democracy, the ideas of participation and representation are so interlinked that it is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to separate them. Chandhoke (2009: 819) advanced this argument when he said that "participation and representation are constitutive of each other. Without participatory democracy, representatives have immense power to act, as they will, without let or hindrance. Without some mechanism of representation, participatory citizenship is of little practical import."

In the context of political parties as the prime institutions of representation, what this means is that people's participation in party activities and decision making may be meaningless if the quality of representation is poor. The implication is that in a representative democracy like Malawi, an assessment of the process of political linkage would be incomplete without evaluating the dynamics of representation. Since this study is focusing on political parties as linkage institutions, it is imperative to assess whether

the quality of representation gives party members a reliable platform for influencing their party's policies—and consequently government policies—through party leaders and other officials such as MPs.

But like many concepts in political science, pinning down what representation is and how best people's interests can be represented is not so straightforward (Chandhoke, 2009, Johari, 2005). The Encyclopedia Britannica (vol.19:135, in Johari, 2005) defines representation as "the process through which the attitudes, preferences, viewpoints and desires of the entire citizenry or part of them are, with their expressed approval, shaped into governmental action on their behalf by a smaller number among them with binding effect upon the represented." Lindgren (2009) contends that "Although there is a considerable difference in usage of the term representation, most scholars seem to agree that the representativeness of a political system can, at least partly, be judged by the closeness of opinion between those who govern and those who are governed." These two definitions converge on the idea that political representation helps to translate people's views into government policy. In other words, it adds meaning and substance to the process of participation and political linkage. As Heywood (1994:177) says, "political representation therefore acknowledges a link between two otherwise separate entities—government and the governed—and implies that through this link the people's views are articulated or their interests are secured."

On how the idea of representation can and should be achieved in practice, there are wide divergences on the issue. The radical theory of representation rejects the whole idea of representative government and argues that citizens are their own best representatives on issues that matter to them. As Rousseau argued, sovereignty resides in what he called

the “general will” of the people and cannot be delegated to representatives (Ibele, 1972). However, with the complexities of the modern nations, it is impractical to expect people to gather at one point, the Athenian style, and deliberate on every single issue that affects them.

On the other hand, the Burkean thesis, also called ‘virtual representation’ views the representative as a free agent who should not be constrained by the interests of his constituents when making decisions. The idea is that since the representative was elected on the basis of his abilities, he should be left alone to exercise his intelligence, wisdom and conscience when taking up positions on issues (Ibele, 1972, Heywood, 1994). Speaking in 1774, Edmund Burke (Heywood 1994: 177), the architect of this theory, argued that “your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.”

The major weakness of this model of representation is that it is intrinsically anti-democratic in the sense that it gives representatives too much leeway to decide what is best for their constituents. Heywood (1994) argues that representatives may become insulated from popular pressures and interests, thereby defeating the very idea of representation as a process of linking citizens with government.

In contrast, the loyal partisan thesis conceives of the official more as a representative of his party than constituents. In this regard, the representative is more answerable to party leadership than to the wider constituency. For the purposes of this study, a more relevant theory of representation is the agency model which sees the representative as the agent of his constituency. On the basis of this, the representative is expected to advance the interests of his constituents even if this conflicts with his own and his party’s beliefs.

The representative is required to vote as instructed by his or her constituents (Ibele, 1972, Johari, 2005). This theory casts political parties and MPs as channels that people can use to influence public policy. The duty of the representative is to explain to his or her constituents the contents of public policy, what it constitutes and its broader implications, and then elicit their opinions on the position that he or the party should take on the issue.

Since no representative fits precisely into any of the theories of representation discussed above (Ibele, 1972), it would be naïve to expect the agent to act as a robot that has been programmed to behave in some predetermined manner. It is for this reason that, while largely being the agent of his constituents, the representative should have some room to exercise his judgment on issues. This is because "No pure relation of representation is obtainable because it is of the essence of the process of representation that the representative has to contribute to the identity of what is represented" (Laclau, 1996: 87, in Chandhoke, 2009).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that political participation lies at the heart of democratic politics. Democracy is about enabling citizens to influence the personnel of government and the policies they implement, an ideal that can be realised if people have the opportunities to engage with their government. The chapter has also argued that for political participation to be achieved in a representative democracy like Malawi, there is need for linkage institutions. These are institutions that connect citizens with their government. Examples of such institutions are political parties, interest groups and parliament. Since political linkage means that people participate in government indirectly

through intermediate institutions, the implication is that the linkage institutions themselves should be democratic by enabling their members to influence the policies they make. This is why this study examines decision making styles in political parties in Malawi.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT, PARTY CONVENTIONS AND MANIFESTOS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the role of parliament, party manifestos and conventions in empowering people to influence government policies. The aim is to establish a link between people's participation in shaping the issues tackled in the three avenues and their ability to influence the policies that government formulates and implements. Since these areas have been used as units of analysis for people's participation, it is crucial that there is an adequate theoretical exploration to justify their use as action areas for assessing decision making in political parties in Malawi.

4.1 Party Conventions: Rationale and Structure of Representation

National conventions are the highest organs in the decision making structures of political parties (Khembo and Svasand, 2007). The constitutions of both MCP and UDF bear this out by designating the national convention as the supreme decision making body in the party[2]. To buttress the argument that national conventions are supreme institutions in decision making in parties, article 48 of the UDF constitution states that only the

[2] Article 39 (1) of the MCP constitution and Article 10 (a) of the UDF constitution designate party conventions as the supreme decision making bodies in the two parties.

convention has the power to authorise the dissolution of the party. In addition, article 14 (2) of the MCP constitution states that the party's NEC has no mandate to dismiss any member who was elected at the national convention. In addition, the constitutions for both parties vest the powers to elect party candidates in presidential elections in national conventions. However, this notwithstanding, as Khembo and Svasand (2007) note, in practice party NECs tend to dominate in decision making, sometimes even overriding the party's constitution.[3] But in spite of this, national conventions remain a key forum for shaping both the leadership composition and policies in the parties. It is from this perspective that understanding the level and quality of participation at the conventions provides important insights into decision making and, hence, democracy in the party.

In broad terms, national conventions for the two parties perform two functions: Electing national leaders and making policy decisions for the party. The leaders elected at conventions are party presidents and other members of the NEC. For the two parties, delegates to the convention are drawn from national, regional, district and constituency committees. In terms of the UDF, all cabinet ministers who are party members, NEC and regional committee members attend the convention. At the district level, 15 delegates attend the convention. These are: district governor, treasurer, secretary, campaign director, organising secretary and five representatives each for the women and youth directorates. At the constituency level, only the governor is eligible to participate at the convention. Apart from these, sitting MPs and councilors also attend the convention.[4] As is the case with UDF, all MCP cabinet ministers, NEC members, regional committee

[3] For example, MCP fired its publicity secretary on parliamentary affairs, the late Ishmael Chafukira, although the party's constitution states that the NEC has no mandate to dismiss members elected at the national convention.
[4] UDF constitution, Article 10 (m).

members and constituency governors attend the convention. Sitting MPs and councilors are also eligible to attend the convention. The difference between the two parties is that in MCP nine district committee members attend the convention. These are: district chairman, secretary and treasurer, and chairman, treasurer and secretary for the league of Malawi Women and the League of Malawi Youths[5].

4.2 Party Manifestos: The Key Actors

Sabatier (1994), Budge (2001) and Scarrow (2005) present party manifestos as crucial platforms for influencing public policy. Sabetier (1994:2) argued that "To a remarkable extent, the policy priorities of governments in democracies reflect the formal programs presented by competing political parties during elections." Budge (2001:211) was making the same argument when he asserted that "Election programmes also have a special standing as the only collective policy statement that parties as such ever make. No other source represents the combined views of the party as an organization." Scarrow (2005) went farther to say that not only are party manifestos critical as avenues that enable parties to influence government programmes, but that the formulation processes for the manifestos are a key indicator of whether the party is democratic. The point is that the manifesto should reflect the input of the majority of party members.

One illustration of the significance of a party manifesto as a key tool for influencing government policy are the MCP manifesto for the 2004 and 2009 elections. Both manifestos promised that, if voted into power, the party would implement a universal subsidy programme. Since 2004, MCP has advanced this argument vehemently. In 2005,

[5] MCP constitution, Article 41 (1-11).

the party put the implementation of a universal subsidy as a condition for its vote in passing the national budget (Chinsinga, 2007).

Article 31 (1) of the MCP constitution mandates the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) to produce and publish a manifesto that should detail:

a. The party's development plans for the national economy and measures for implementing them;
b. Policies for the maintenance of public order, the protection of the interests of the state and the safeguarding of the rights of citizens;
c. Domestic and external policies of the state;
d. Alternative policies for government ministries and other administrative organs where current policies do not agree with those of the party.

Although the constitution does not specify how, in principle, the party should go about formulating the manifesto, the party recognises the crucial role that manifestos play in influencing government programmes. In contrast, constitutions for UDF and DPP do not say anything on manifestos. This notwithstanding, the two parties have manifestos which they went to great length to publicise during election campaign in 2009 for DPP and 2004 for UDF.[6]

Data on party manifestos was collected and analysed at three levels; from ordinary party members, local and senior party leaders, and experts. At the lower party level, the idea was to ascertain at what point, if any, ordinary party members participate in the design processes for their parties' manifestos. For senior party leaders, the rationale for interviewing them was to understand the intricacies of the design processes for this policy

[6] Although the UDF produced a campaign manifesto for the 2009 elections, the party did not officially launch it as it participated in the elections as part of its alliance with the MCP. The party was a junior partner in the alliance because neither the presidential candidate nor his running mate came from the UDF.

document. The third level involved experts who have at one point or the other been engaged by political parties to process material for manifestoes.

4.3 Parliament, Representation and Public Policy

As one of the three branches of government, parliament is a crucial institution for initiating and setting public policies (Harrigan, 1991). Apart from making laws and providing oversight over the judiciary and the executive, parliament acts as a bridge between people and government. The latter aspect of parliament is traditionally referred to as the representation function of the legislature. Ibele (1972) argues that while parliament shares the oversight and law-making functions with other branches of government, its uniqueness lies in that it is a deliberative assembly.

Patel and Svasand (2007) contend that in a representative democracy the legislature is called the forum of the people. Considering the centrality of parliament as a representative institution, it is crucial to establish whether MPs, the people citizens elect to represent them in the legislature, involve their constituencies before taking positions on parliamentary issues.

Olson (1994:1, in Hague and Harrop, 2001), made the point more poignant when he said "legislatures join society to the legal structure of authority in the state. Legislatures are representative bodies: they reflect the sentiments and opinions of the citizens." Consistent with the agency model of representation guiding this study, the presumption is that, ideally, MPs work as intermediaries between citizens and government. Although in practice this is not always the case, deviations from the principle does not defeat the ideal

that legislatures should be some kind of a microcosm of society in terms of reflecting and advancing the general preferences of the population.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN EXAMINATION OF DECISION MAKING IN POLITICAL PARTIES

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature of decision making in political parties in Malawi using parliament, election manifestos and party conventions as areas of focus. The chapter begins by examining party members' views on whether their Member of Parliament (MP) involves them in deciding the position the MP should take in the legislature on a wide range of issues. The idea is to establish if people's engagement with their MPs is solid enough to create a basis for genuine representation of their interests by the MP on parliamentary issues. The next section of the chapter discusses the issue of whether people participate in the formulation and adoption of their party's manifestos. As an important document for winning elections and influencing government policies, the manifesto should, by and large, capture the input of a wide range of party members, including those who do not hold positions in the party.

Next, the chapter discusses the dynamics of party conventions by examining the quality of representation at the forum. This is done by investigating whether representatives consult their constituencies before going to the conventions. Since at the time when most of the study was conducted DPP had not yet held a convention, the data

on this issue only applies to MCP and UDF. The next section of the chapter deals with the issue of people's perceptions on whether their parties involve them in the decisions they make. Finally, the conclusion to the chapter draws together the nuances emerging from the study and assesses whether the quality of decision making and, consequently, representation in political parties is ideal for promoting and entrenching the principle of people's participation in government policies.

5.1 Analysing People's Participation in Parliamentary Issues

From FGDs, the key theme that comes out is that people feel that their MPs are not accessible and do not engage them on relevant issues, a situation that diminishes their ability to influence the positions that the MPs take on different issues in parliament. This sentiment was especially intense in the DPP constituency, so much so that at two discussion sites, participants proposed mechanisms for linking them with government that clearly showed their lack of trust in the MP. At one site,[7] participants proposed that government should establish an independent institution in every constituency that should convey people's views on a range of issues to government. This institution, according to the participants, should report directly to the president, not even his cabinet ministers, to minimise the possibility that its agenda might be hijacked by some politicians and government officials.

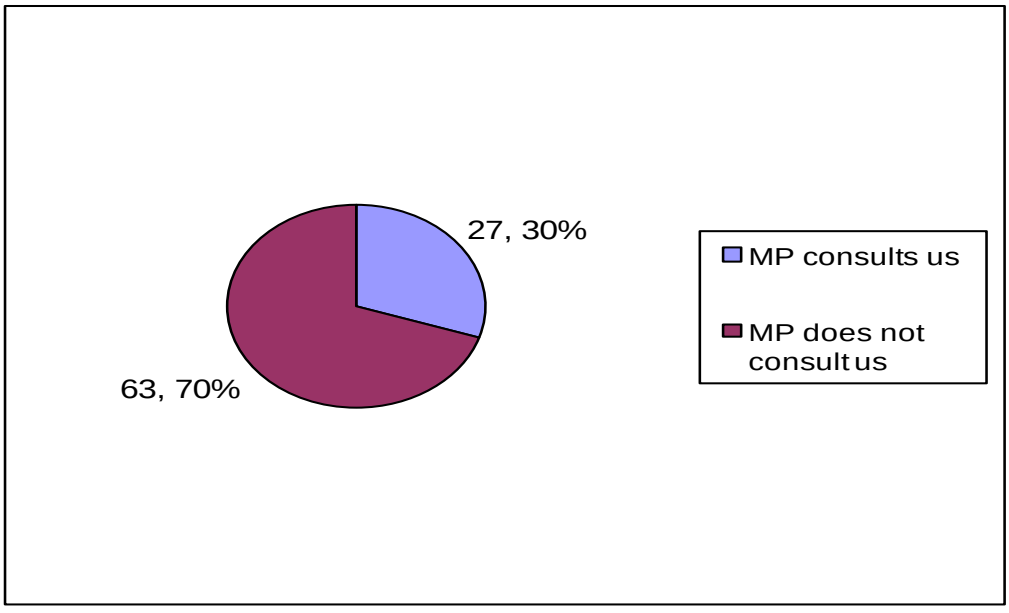
Participants at this FGD site also proposed that an MP should be tied to an enforceable contract that should be deposited at the DC's office for monitoring. The key term of the contract is that the MP's survival should be performance-based, such that once found incompetent, he should be fired by a competent court of law where the

[7] Thondwe Trading Centre, May 1, 2008.

constituents and the DC will make a case for his dismissal. The other terms of the contract are that the MP should be based in the constituency, should consult them on both party and government issues, should declare his assets, and that there should be a mid-term review of his contract which will determine whether he continues as an MP.

At another site[8] in the constituency, participants proposed that government should hire a group of journalists who should be traveling around constituencies getting people's views on issues, including on community development needs. All these proposals, naïve as they may be, only demonstrate people's perceptions that their MPs do not engage with them on issues to do with Parliament and other areas. In the questionnaire survey, about 70 percent of the respondents said their MP does not consult them on relevant issues, including those to do with Parliament.

Figure 1: People's Views on Whether MPs Consult Them



[8]Tholowa Village, July 24, 2008

On account of such sentiments, it is not surprising that when asked to suggest how their parties can expand spaces for them to influence public policy, the majority of the respondents said making their MP accessible and responsive hold the key to their empowerment. The following sentiments, expressed by respondents in the DPP constituency, capture this feeling.

> *"The main problem we have in this constituency is that our MP is irresponsible. As long as he is there, nothing will change in the constituency in terms of our development needs."*[9]

> *"Government should set up an office here where we can present our needs directly instead of going through the MP."*[10]

Case study 3 discusses an example of issues respondents felt they should have been involved in influencing their MPs' decision.

[9] Interview with a DPP member at Thondwe Trading Centre in the Zomba Thondwe Constituency on November 30, 2008.
[10] Interview with DPP member at Mponda Galauka Village, T/A Chikowi in Zomba Thondwe Constituncy on November 30, 2008.

Case Study 3: A Test of Representation

At Tholowa Village in Chimwalira Ward in the Zomba Thondwe Constituency, participants were particularly not happy that their MP had presented an issue in parliament they felt was far removed from what they need in the area. The MP had asked the Electoral Commission to split the constituency into two, arguing that it is too big for one MP to represent effectively and develop. Participants at the FGD session argued that the MP should have consulted them on the issue. They said that the size of the constituency is reasonable for an MP to represent and that their legislator was only using the issue as an excuse for not doing a good job in the area.

This came after the participants had expressed dismay that their MP was not accessible for them to engage him on development issues and party matters in the constituency. It is important to say that this theme of the inaccessibility of the MP emerged at all three discussion sites in the constituency.

For an issue as critical as splitting a constituency, it is surprising that the MP did not engage his constituents on the issue. His decision raises questions of who he was representing on the matter. This is against the spirit expressed by participants at the three FGD areas in the constituency who said that the MP is their servant who should always consult them before raising crucial issues that concern them. When asked what motivated him to make the proposal in parliament, the MP said he felt the size of the constituency was making it difficult for him to represent the area effectively. He said it was a decision he made on his own without being influenced by the party or his constituents. On this issue, it is clear that the MP regarded himself as a 'virtual representative,' as he did not want to be restrained by the influence of both his party

and the people he purported to represent. Admittedly, the MP cannot consult people in his constituency every time he wants to make a decision or take a stand on an issue. However, the issue of splitting a constituency is so critical that in an ideal democratic setting, it is inconceivable that one would make the proposal without consulting his constituents. In any case, if the people in the constituency would have been the primary beneficiaries of the proposal had it gone through, why would one side-step the beneficiaries when making a decision that would affect them?

In view of such sentiments, it is not surprising that there was a strong reaction in the country in 1995 when parliament repealed Section 64 of the country's constitution which empowered constituents to recall their MPs if they felt the MPs were not performing to their expectation. The argument by MPs for repealing the provision was that some people would use it to exact vengeance on their political enemies. However, in the context of the strong sentiments against their MPs expressed by participants in all the three constituencies, it means that people feel there should be a process of dealing with ineffectual MPs even before the expiry of their five-year mandate.

Viewed against this background, the argument by Verba (1967) that decision makers like MPs are more likely to be responsive to people's wishes because they are dependent on them for votes and other forms of support is not sustained. As the case study has shown on the proposal by the MP for Zomba Thondwe Constituency, when MPs feel their interests may be threatened by popular input, they are prepared to ignore their constituents in pursuit of what they believe strengthens their political cause. Another point worth noting in Verba's formulation on political participation is that for people to

be motivated to participate in politics, they should feel that the process is effective in the sense that they will be able to achieve their goal by taking part in the process. In light of the loss of trust in the MP expressed by participants in the study, what it means is that people do not believe that MPs are effective as representatives. In the final analysis, this undermines the ideas of participation and, consequently, representation as fundamental principles in democracy. The idea is that if people do not participate in politics because they feel that linkage institutions cannot be trusted, there is no basis from which the representatives can draw legitimacy.

Gaventa's (2006) argument that political participation enables citizens to be co-governors means that those given the mandate to represent them like MPs should be able to engage meaningfully with their constituencies before raising issues in forums such as Parliament. As Patel and Svasand (2007) argue, parliament is the forum of the people, meaning that in the absence of their participation in shaping the content and direction of the issues discussed in the legislature, the legitimacy of MPs as people's representatives is questionable. In the words of Sabatier (1994: 1) "modern democracies are representative democracies. Political parties play a key role in this representative process, and if they fail to play that role the entire edifice is flawed."

5.1.2 Opposition MPs and Government Policies

Although generally discontent with the MP was prevalent at all nine FGD sites and in the questionnaire survey, in the UDF and MCP constituencies some participants argued that the MP is powerless to develop the constituency because government does not listen

to the opposition. At an FGD conducted at Misanjo village[11] in Lilongwe Mpenu, an MCP constituency, some participants said their MP had been presenting development needs in the area such as boreholes to government but that government was reluctant to respond positively because it feared that doing so would be giving the opposition support. This sentiment was also captured at an FGD site in Chilomoni[12] in Blantyre West, a UDF constituency, where the dominant argument was that the MP for the area is not to blame for what they viewed as lack of development in the area because in spite of the MP's best efforts in taking constituency development needs to government, things are not improving because government does not want to help people in constituencies where there is an opposition MP for fear of propping up the legislator. The following sentiments captured in one-on-one interviews with ordinary MCP and UDF members reflect this feeling.

"Because of the political conflicts currently going on in the country, it is difficult for the DPP government to listen opposition parties like UDF."[13]

"The MP always tells us that government does not listen to him because he is in opposition."[14]

The issues that were mostly cited as examples demonstrating government's negative attitude towards the opposition were the non-availability of input subsidy fertiliser in the areas and government's reluctance to implement Section 65 of the country's constitution.

[11] July 20, 2008
[12] June 19, 2008
[13] Interview with UDF member. Interview conducted at Nthukwa area in Blantyre West constituency on December 29, 2008.
[14] Interview with MCP member. Interview conducted at Mzingwa Village, T/A Mazengera in Lilongwe Mpenu Constituency on November 26, 2008.

Section 65 empowers the Speaker of Parliament to expel from the legislature MPs who, after being elected on the platform of one political party, join another party that has MPs in Parliament. This idea is popularly known as "crossing the floor." At the time the study was being conducted, most of the MPs that the ruling DPP had were defectors from mainly the UDF. The UDF, working closely with the MCP, had moved a motion in Parliament asking the Speaker to declare seats of those MPs who had crossed the floor vacant. But to their disappointment, the Speaker did not make a ruling on the issue after a government MP, Yunus Mussa, obtained a court injunction restraining the speaker from ruling on the matter until some legal matters surrounding the issue were dealt with. In the course of the battle between the two camps, president Bingu wa Mutharika petitioned the Constitutional Court to declare the provision unconstitutional, arguing that it is against the principle of freedom of association. However, the court upheld the validity of the section.

Not satisfied with the ruling, the president took the issue to the Supreme Court of Appeal. But the country's highest court sustained the Constitutional Court's ruling that the provision was constitutional. In the aftermath of the ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeal, the battleground returned to Parliament where the opposition continued to push for the implementation of the section against those deemed to have crossed the floor. But the legal battles over the issue prevented the speaker from making a declaration on the matter until the new parliament was sworn in after the elections held on May 19, 2009.

It should be noted that the root of the problems between DPP and the opposition was the decision by Mutharika to leave UDF, on whose ticket he won the 2004 presidential

elections, to form his DPP[15] in 2005. The UDF felt cheated that after winning the elections, it found itself in opposition. On the other hand, MCP and its president John Tembo felt that Mutharika cheated them of victory in 2004. So, both UDF and MCP had scores to settle with Mutharika. The situation between the two camps deteriorated so much so that the DPP, which was in a minority in parliament, had huge problems passing bills in the legislature. At one point, the opposition sought to impeach the president, citing a number of constitutional violations.[16] At the time the data for the study was being collected, animosity and suspicion characterised the relationship between the opposition and government as exemplified by the following comments from an ordinary UDF member.

> *"We have been cheated by the DPP. We are now in opposition although we won the 2004 elections. We have been robbed of government. They are implementing their own ideas, not those of the UDF."*[17]

But beyond this relationship between DPP and opposition, the sentiments that government ignores requests for development from opposition MPs reflect a dominant perception created by politicians in Malawi that an area can only develop if it has some links with the ruling party, especially if the MP is from the party in government. When opposition MPs are defecting to the ruling party, they do so using the argument that they want their areas to develop because the only way of achieving development is by working with government. For example, the following statements, one from an independent MP

[15] See Semu-Banda, Pilirani, 'Bingu to launch party next week,' *The Nation*, February 9, 2005.
[16] See Munthali, Gedion, 'UDF, MCP agree on Bingu's impeachment,' *The Nation*, June 7, 2005; Munthali, Gedion, 'House clears path for Bingu's removal,' *The Nation*, June 8, 2005; Nyirongo, Edwin, 'MCP, UDF agree on impeachment procedures,' *The Nation*, February 20, 2007.
[17] Interview with UDF member at Nancholi in Blantyre City West Constituency on August 8, 2008.

and another from a former UDF official speaking after he and other UDF officials in Phalombe district had just defected to the DPP in 2006, reflect this argument.

> *"Our area has lagged behind for a long time, but we have discovered that President Bingu wa Mutharika is very clear about his intentions to share the development cake of the country."*[18]

> *"During the meetings which we have had we agreed that we should support government because we know that is where we can get development, and not from the party."*[19]

Statements from the president himself, especially former President Bakili Muluzi, reinforce this perception. On many occasions during his rule, Muluzi argued that it does not make sense for him to develop areas that have opposition MPs. Whether in practice government indeed favours areas where it has MPs at the expense of opposition areas has not been empirically established.

5.2 Political Party Manifestos: Whose Documents Are They?

From the perspective of FGDs, a clear picture emerged; ordinary party members do not fully grasp issues to do with a manifesto, including what it means. The responses that people gave were very crude and imprecise, indicating that they do not understand what the document is all about, let alone its design processes. Some of the responses

[18] A Mr Machinga, UDF district secretary speaking at a ceremony announcing that about half of the district executive committee members in Phalombe district had left the UDF to join DPP. 'UDF committee defects to DPP,' *The Nation*, 30 January, 2006, by Gedion Munthali.
[19] Jimmy Banda, an independent MP who was aligned with the UDF speaking after a group of independent MPs had agreed to work with the DPP after its formation. '23 independents leave UDF,' *The Nation*, February 8, 2006 by Olivia Kumwenda.

participant gave on what a manifesto is included "rules guiding operations of a party," and "development strategy for a political party." For the few that have some level of knowledge of manifestoes, the responses they gave on design processes consistently pointed to the direction that they only receive the finished product. The response that emerged consistently from those who understand what a manifesto is all about was that "it is done by the NEC," or "our leaders do this." Table 3 is a case study that discusses people's knowledge of party manifestos.

Case study 4: Meanings of a Manifesto and Who Designs It[20]

Participants at a focus group discussion at Dzunda Village in Lilongwe Mpenu Constituency typified the general lack of understanding of the meaning and design process of a manifesto. The majority of the participants indicated that they do not know what the term means. For those who showed some understanding, the responses were generally imprecise as the following responses show.

The meaning of a manifesto

- *Timangovera* [We just hear about it but we don't know what it means].
- *Pulani ya mawa* [Plan on what somebody wants to do in future].
- *Ndondomeko za chipani* [Party programmes].
- *Chimene munthu akufuna kudzapanga mtsogolo* [What somebody wants to do in future].
- *Chimene munthu akufuna kudzapanga akadzalowa m'mboma* [What somebody wants to do if they take over government].

[20] FGD conducted on July 24, 2008 at Dzunda Village, T/A Mazengera in Lilongwe Mpenu Constituency

People who contribute ideas and designs manifestoes

- *Akuluakulu a chipani* [Senior party officials].
- *A Tembo* [Party president John Tembo].

The question to raise from these sentiments is: considering this level of understanding of the issue, is it reasonable to expect the majority of party members to influence their party's manifestos? As the discussion on manifestos has shown, it is not surprising that people's influence in the formulation of their party's manifesto is very negligible.

The fact that people do not know what a manifesto is demonstrates that the whole question of participation is a distant idea. It is inconceivable to expect people to meaningfully participate in something they do not understand. From the broader scheme of things, this could indicate failure by political parties to socialise their members on the crucial areas that can help them participate in party policies and, ultimately, government programmes.

In terms of the questionnaire survey, out of the 90 respondents sampled, about 37 percent demonstrated some knowledge, rough as it might be, of what a manifesto means. However, the knowledge level dipped substantially when asked if they know the level of party leadership that is involved in the process of producing the manifesto, as only about 5 percent were able to say that the party's NEC handles the process. The majority would simply say "our leaders do this." This runs counter to claims made by some senior party officials during interviews, especially from UDF and MCP, that party structures, from branches to the NEC, are actively involved in the input processes for manifestoes [Refer to table 4]**.** The claim by a senior UDF official that the party has permanent manifesto

committees[21] at all levels could not be supported by the situation on the ground as neither the committees nor any consultation systems for manifestoes could be verified by the study.

Table 2: Selected Sentiments from Key Informants on Party Manifestos

POSITION	PARTY	KEY COMMENTS
NEC member	MCP	We get input from Area Development Committees (ADCs). We get consensus on what people are saying.
NEC member	MCP	A select committee, chosen on the basis of expertise, handles the process. Ordinary people only know the issues during and after the launch.
Regional committee member (Centre)	MCP	It's a leadership process, others are told after the process is through.
District committee member (Lilongwe)	MCP	It's done by a select team of MPs and experts. It is supposed to be a secret so that information does not leak before the manifesto is launched.
Constituency committee member (Lilongwe Mpenu)	MCP	Senior party officials do everything. I have never seen a copy of a manifesto the whole of my life.
NEC member	UDF	The process begins immediately after elections. We have manifesto committees at all levels of our structures.
NEC member	UDF	We seek people's views through our structures. We don't have permanent manifesto committees.
Regional committee member (South)	UDF	The NEC does everything. Except for those involved in its formulation, its contents are not known until the national conference.
Regional committee member (South)	UDF	I don't know who formulates the manifesto.
Regional committee member (Centre)	UDF	Party president sets up a team and gives it what he intends to do if he wins the elections. Then the team consults. For the sake of discipline, the process is kept

[21] Interview with a UDF NEC member, August 7, 2008.

		a secret until the launch of the document.
District committee member (Blantyre)	UDF	NEC does everything. We know the contents after everything is done.
NGC member	DPP	It's a highly consultative process involving all levels of the party. Before launching it, we do a pre-testing of the manifesto to see if it is in tune with the larger body of voters.
District committee member (Zomba Urban)	DPP	The NGC decides the issues to be included in the manifesto. We also consider people's views expressed at rallies.
Constituency committee member (Zomba Thondwe)	DPP	I don't know whether the party has a manifesto.
Constituency committee member (Zomba Thondwe)	DPP	At the constituency level, we are like children, so we are only told after *akuluakulu* (senior party officials) have done everything.
Constituency committee member (Zomba Thondwe)	DPP	The NEC formulates the manifesto, but we need to be given the opportunity to contribute. It should reflect our views as members.

This strongly suggests that manifestoes in political parties are both highly secretive and the work of a small group of party insiders and some external experts. The conflicting statements from party officials on the design process of manifestos also reinforces the idea that not many people, including some in the NEC, know how their parties formulate the manifesto. In terms of the design process, the pattern across all the three parties is almost the same in the sense that the process involves setting up special committees of senior party officials drawn from the NEC on the basis of expertise in specific areas. These manifesto committees are in turn made up of sub-committees that focus on specialised areas like the civil service, agriculture, economy, national security,

sports and other areas. Sub-committee members brainstorm among themselves and with external experts, like those in the academia, to give some depth and sophistication to the ideas. The sub-committees also sample the national mood and convergences on issues by analysing the media and other material. After compiling their findings and analysing them, the sub-committees then make both oral and written presentations of the issues to the national manifesto committees where further scrutiny is made and suggestions for improvements and fine tuning are put forward.

It is after the sub-committees have finalised their contributions that they present their write-ups to the national manifesto committees which in turn takes up the issues with the NEC for its own scrutiny, after which the document is declared ready for further processes like printing and distribution after the official launch. In some parties, the contributions from sub-committees are submitted to external experts to put the document together in a way that demonstrates a level of reasoning and sophistication needed to earn the party a measure of respect. For the MCP, the sub-committees dealing with specific policy areas report directly to the NEC without using a national manifesto committee as an intermediate stage.

It is also important to indicate that the party's research teams, headed by the director of research, are at the heart of the process. Besides, the data suggests that the design processes, especially in MCP, are path-dependent in the sense that the ideas, thinking and basic framework anchoring the previous manifestoes are used as the major tools for shaping the contents of subsequent manifestoes[22]. An expert[23] who has been involved in the process said this could be the case because parties do not want to depart substantially

[22] Interview with MCP NEC member, August 10, 2008
[23] Interview with a senior lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Chancellor College, University of Malawi. He helped design the MCP manifesto for the 1999 elections.

from their original policy orientations as a way of projecting a consistent image and character. This path-dependent process has a downside in the sense that it limits the room for further contributions from party members.

The manifesto design framework presented above does not always apply to all parties at all times. According to some experts close to the issue and party insiders, there are times when outside experts are not involved, especially when the party feels it has the capacity to handle the process using its own members. For example, an expert and party sources indicated that the 2004 MCP manifesto was done exclusively by experts within the party's NEC. As one expert within the academia said, "As more technical and enlightened people join political parties, manifesto production is more likely to be done in-house."[24]

When the findings from key informant interviewees are bounced off against the data from ordinary party members, what clearly comes out is that the only time ordinary party members access the manifesto is when the final document is being launched at a political rally or party conference. The argument by an MCP NEC member that "We don't want people to know what we are planning," makes sense in the context of this finding. The idea is that since manifestos are part of the campaign process for elections, issues contained in the document should be kept secret up until the manifesto is launched at the beginning of the campaign so that other parties do not 'steal' their ideas before the campaign. To illustrate this, the MCP NEC member said in 2004 the made the mistake of launching its manifesto too early as this gave UDF the opportunity to 'steal' its ideas, especially on the input subsidy programme.

[24] Questionnaire response from a former lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, August, 2008. He was involved in the formulation of the MCP manifesto for the 1999 elections as a support researcher.

The findings on the dynamics of party conventions, which parties use to adopt their manifestos, show that this purported participation is only a phantom process. The next section on conventions illuminates on this issue further. What all this means is that manifestoes as important agenda setting tools for political parties do not afford ordinary members the opportunity to help shape the thinking of their leaders on crucial issues that may eventually constitute government policies. Viewed from the argument that those who set the agenda hold the power (Howlett 2006, Harrigan, 2003), one could posit that opportunities for the influence of ordinary party members as important political players is severely limited. This is the issue that Scarrow (2005:10) articulates when she argues that "one of the ways to assess the degree of internal democracy in a party is to ask who helps determine the content of electoral promises." The findings defeat the ideal expressed by Budge (2001) that manifestos are a collective policy statement that represent the combined views of the parties as organisations. On the basis of the findings, it is reasonable to conclude that the views expressed in the manifestos reflect the thinking of a few party elites. The implication is that the majority of party members do not have the opportunities to influence their parties' positions on public policy issues. This weakens the ability of the parties to perform the crucial process of political linkage.

While it should be admitted that for purposes of practical considerations it is unreasonable to expect parties to involve all and sundry in the processes of producing their manifestos, parties as linkage institutions can create appropriate forums where ordinary members, through their representatives, can present their input into the process. For example, parties can hold national conferences every two years where they could

review a wide range of their activities and policies. These occasions could be utilised to broaden spaces for participation for the majority of their members.

5.3 Investigating People's Participation in Party Conventions

In the context of the study, party conventions were used to investigate two main variables; candidate selection and policy influence from the position of ordinary party members. The idea was to ascertain whether conventions provide enough spaces for the participation of ordinary members to choose their leaders and influence their party's policies. Three questions were put forward to UDF and MCP members on conventions; whether they know their representatives at the forum; whether their representatives consult them on the positions they should take at the convention on a wide range of issues including voting for party leaders; and whether they have adequate information on the agenda of the conventions, including the people contesting for various positions at the function.

On whether they know their representatives at the conventions, the majority of party members at FGDs displayed considerable lack of knowledge on the issue. Some of those who answered the question said the MP is the one who represents them at the convention. This pattern was confirmed by one-on-one interviews which showed that only 17 percent of the respondents said they know their representatives at the convention. Of these, only 8 percent indicted to have ever been consulted by their representatives on the positions they should take on the issues to be discussed at the conventions.

On the question of whether they know the issues to be tackled at the convention, there was an overwhelming bias towards the election of mainly the party's presidential

candidate. Both FGDs and the survey questionnaire showed that the majority of those who indicated to know the agenda of the forum said they usually know the people vying for the top seat of presidential candidate. The following views from ordinary UDF and MCP members typify the responses on the issue.

> *"A convention is where all party leaders meet to choose a presidential candidate."*[25]

> *"A convention is a meeting where the party elects its representative in presidential elections."*[26]

> *"A convention is a meeting that chooses our party's representatives in parliament and other party leaders."*[27]

In individual interviews with ordinary members, 37 percent of the respondents said they know only the presidential candidates. This is not surprising given the wide media publicity that candidates for the position generate. In contrast, only about 3 percent indicated to know all the contestants for all positions at the conventions. This means that for the bulk of the people contesting for various senior positions in the party, the majority of the party members do not know them. For MCP, this is consistent with the findings from key informants who indicated that as a tradition the party does not draw up a list of contestants before the convention. According to a senior party official, people who are

[25] Interview with a UDF member. Interview done at Sigelege in Blantyre City West Constituency on July 7, 2008.
[26] Interview with a UDF member. Interview conducted at Nandolo in Blantyre City West Constituency on December 29, 2008.
[27] Interview with an MCP member at Muzu Village, T/A Mazengera in Lilongwe Mpenu Constituency on November 26, 2008.

interested to contest at the convention officially announce their candidature right there at the convention when elections for their position are about to be held. This process is designed to "avoid unwanted people."[28]

Party key informants gave conflicting information on whether their members are given the necessary information on the issues to be tackled at the convention. Some interviewees indicated that their members at the constituency level know the people contesting for various positions at the convention and that the candidates themselves visit constituencies to campaign for the seats.[29] In contrast, others[30] said that the candidates are known at the convention. However, when the information is bounced against the findings from FGDs and the questionnaire survey, it is clear that the majority of party members do not have the necessary information on the issue.

The implication is that the majority of ordinary party members are largely left out of the processes that lead to the formulation of critical decisions in the party, especially those handled at conventions. If they do not know their representatives and where those representatives make no effort to engage them on the issues for the conventions, it is very inconceivable that such people can have some say on who should lead them and the policies these leaders should pursue for the party. Returning to the issue of the adoption processes for manifestoes, it is clear that even the conventions are not effective mechanisms for empowering the majority of party members to contribute to the thinking on what is ideally supposed to be a corporate document produced and owned by the majority of party members.

[28] Interview with MCP NEC member, February 19, 2009.
[29] For example, a UDF NEC member said candidates for various positions to be contested for at the convention campaign in constituencies before the convention.
[30] For example, UDF regional committee indicated that as a matter of procedure, candidates for positions to be contested for at the convention are only known at the conference.

5.3.1 Party Conventions in Malawi: The Case of the 2008 UDF Convention

The UDF held its 2008 national conference on April 24 to elect the party's presidential candidate for the 2009 elections and to make some changes to its constitution. In keeping with the requirements of its constitution, the party ran adverts in the media announcing the date of the convention and its agenda. What is particularly instructive about the power dynamics that influence the conduct of conventions in the party were the developments that occurred prior to the indaba.

Well before the party made the official announcement that it would hold a convention, some senior party officials expressed interest to contest for the position of the presidential candidate. These were publicity secretary Sam Mpasu, treasurer general George Nga Ntafu, NEC co-opted member Brown Mpinganjira and director of finance Friday Jumbe. At the time the four said they would run for the position, the party's national chairman Bakili Muluzi, who was barred by the national constitution from running again having been president of the country for the required two consecutive terms, had not yet indicated that he would contest at the convention. However, when he declared his interest to run at the convention, the dynamics of the indaba took on a different configuration altogether. The four aspirants immediately declared that they would not contest for the position on the basis that doing so would be showing disrespect to Muluzi. For example, Jumbe said this to the media after withdrawing from the contest:

> *"The waves yes have been opened. But I haven't made a decision yet and I remain undecided, that means I am in the original mode that I would not contest. Last*

time I said I would not contest because of respecting the chairman [Muluzi]. Obviously, whenever Muluzi says I am not standing, then I will stand."[31]

Following Muluzi's declaration that he would contest, the situation for those wishing to run against him became so difficult that practically they stood no realistic chance of winning the elections at the convention. Secretary general Kennedy Makwangwala and governors for the party's four political regions argued in the media that the party had agreed to rally behind Muluzi and that anybody aspiring for the position was, therefore, wasting their time. The statements below from Makwangwala and some regional governors strengthen this argument:

"He [aspirant Cassim Chilumpha] cannot win, this is our party, just wait and see. Can't you see that someone [Muluzi] is going around holding rallies, building the party together with people while the other [Chilumpha] is just sitting? In that situation, who can win?"[32]

"Actually, in this region people are saying if they are given another candidate they will not vote. They said they will go for Atcheya [Muluzi], which means whether we will have 10 or 20 candidates it is still Atcheya who people in the south will go for."[33]

[31] See Kasunda, Anthony, "Hopefuls still out of UDF polls", *Nation On Sunday*, January 20, 2008.
[32] UDF secretary general, Kennedy Makwangwala. See Kalua, Taweni, "Chilumpha wasting time," *The Nation*, April 2, 2008.
[33] UDF regional governor for the southern region, MacDonald Symon. See Mmana, Deogratious, "Muluzi to finance indaba," *The Nation*, March 21, 2008.

"I am speaking for the whole North and take me seriously. We have about 502 delegates from the North and when we go to the convention, we are all going to vote for the Chair [Muluzi]. As a region, we have to go there with one voice."[34]

Apart from statements like these, another issue that skewed the playing field in Muluzi's favour was the fact that he provided the bulk of the funding for the convention.[35] Out of the budget of K22 million for the convention, Muluzi provided K16 million. As an interested party in the process, this compromised the impartiality of the whole conference. On the day of the convention, Muluzi was given the platform to address delegates to the convention while his competitor Chilumpha was denied the opportunity. Although party officials argued that Muluzi addressed the convention as party chairman, it was clear that Muluzi took advantage of the occasion to campaign and build his case for the party's candidacy in the elections. Besides, before and after his speech, pro-UDF musician Lucius Banda sang songs in praise of Muluzi. Again, Chilumpha was not given this advantage. With such platforms that Muluzi had, it was not surprising that he won the election by 1,950 votes against 38 votes for Chilumpha. Although there could be other factors that contributed to Muluzi's victory, the impact of the advantages he had over Chilumpha before and during the convention cannot be ignored.

The implication of this scenario is that power stakes at party conventions suffocate opportunities for people's meaningful participation in influencing the outcome of these national conferences. In parties like UDF which depend almost entirely for funding on

[34] UDF regional governor for the northern region, Kajiso Gondwe. See Mmana, Deogratious, "Muluzi to finance indaba," *The Nation*, March 21, 2008.
[35] Muluzi provided K16 million out of the budget of the budget of K22 million for the convention. See Kumwenda, Olivia, "Muluzi coughs K16 for indaba," *The Nation*, April 24, 2008.

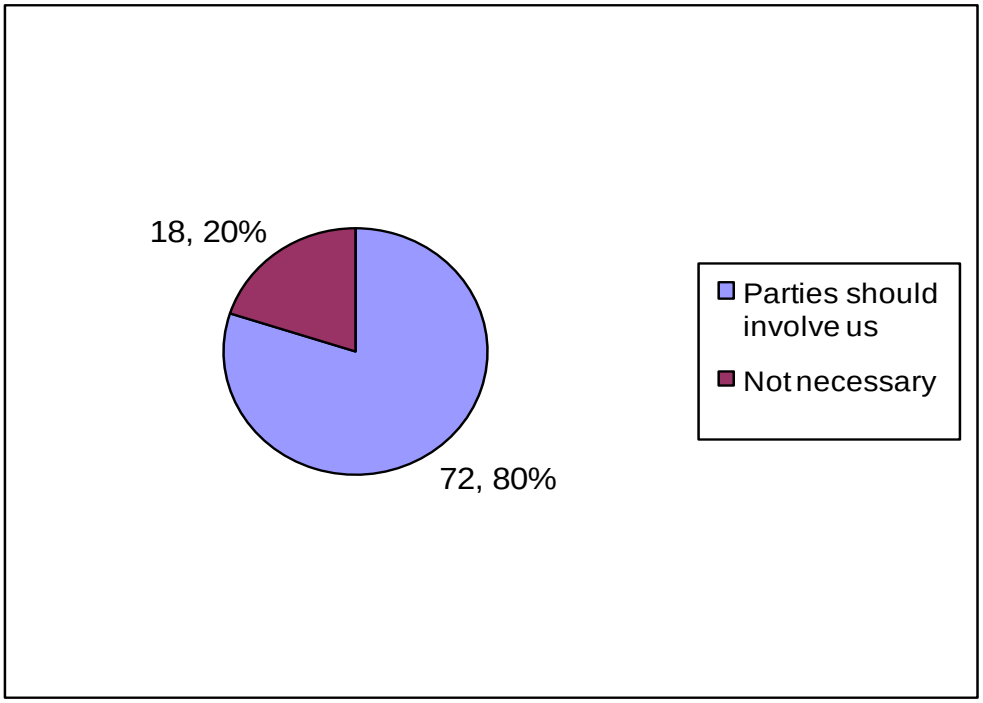
Muluzi and a few others, it means power flows around a few people. This gives them the opportunity to influence the key decisions that the party makes, including who wins at national conventions. In the final analysis, this limits the ability of ordinary party members to shape the decisions and policies the party makes.

5.4 People's Views on Decision Making in Political Parties

To wind up the discussion on decision-making processes in political parties, the study raised three important questions to respondents to gauge their views on the issue. The questions were on: 'Do you think it is necessary for you as an ordinary party member to have a say on your party's policies?; 'Does your party give you the opportunity to influence its policies?' and; 'Do you think political parties are reliable means of conveying your views on government policies and other issues?'

Out of the three questions, the one on whether respondents feel it is necessary for them as ordinary party members to participate in shaping their party's policies, the majority of the responses were in the affirmative. The majority of the respondents at both FGDs and questionnaire survey indicated, about 80 percent for the latter, that they feel parties should give them the opportunity to do so.

Figure 2: People's Views on Whether Parties Should Consult Them



So, it is clear that in spite of their status as ordinary party members, the majority of the respondents felt their voice would add something to the workings of their parties if they are given the chance to participate in processes of influencing their policies. On whether their parties give them the opportunity to influence their policies, the majority of participants at FGDs and questionnaire survey indicated that parties deny them the spaces to contribute to their policies. In the survey, 78 percent of the respondents felt that their parties do not give them the chance to influence their policies. This resonates with the findings of the 2005 Afrobarometer study where the majority of the respondents said the main reason they do not participate in government and political issues is that they are not given a chance to do so by government and representative institutions like political parties.

For the 22 percent who said their parties involve them in their policy making, only about 40 percent were able to provide relevant examples of their participation in this process. Some of the examples that fell outside the parameters of what could be deemed real influence on party policies were those that revolved around involvement in community projects where everybody, including members of other parties, took part. For example, some participant at an FGD in Blantyre West constituency said their MP involves them in community projects like maintenance of school blocks. The participants said since these are community projects, they are open to all members of the community, including members of other political parties.

Besides, the majority of those who gave relevant examples indicated that they are consulted on mainly local party issues. This level of consultation is done by local party leaders such as area chairmen. Only a negligible said they were consulted on such broad issues such as Section 65 of the country's constitution and the national budget. This means that whatever participation party members are involved in, it is almost exclusively on local issues. This, as highlighted earlier, confirms the theme advanced by Khaila and Nthinda (2002) that Malawians do not participate at higher levels of politics. Another argument raised by the two authors that ties in well with these findings is that Malawians do not participate at higher levels of politics because they feel they do not have the chance to do so. If political parties, as the main linkage institutions in a democracy, do not give their members opportunities to influence decision making processes at such forums like Parliament, conventions and manifestoes, the ability of other linkage bodies like civil society to take up the challenge may be limited. Already, it has been established that because of their elitist and donor-driven outlook, and poor organisational abilities

civil society organisations offer limited opportunities that people can use to influence government policies (Chirwa, 2003, Chinsinga 2007).

If the majority of the respondents indicated that their parties do not give them the opportunities to contribute to their policies, do the people view political parties as effective and reliable linkage institutions? It might seem only logical to conclude that the answer is no, at least on the basis of the preceding presentation. However, although most respondents said political parties and their leaders cannot be trusted, the majority felt that, in relative terms, they are the most effective institutions that can link them with government. The argument consistently centred around one issue, namely, that since political leaders have stronger links to policy makers than other linkage institutions like civil society organisations, they are better placed to help them influence government policies. It is a case of embracing the devil because the angel is powerless to help you.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that people's ability to shape their parties' policies articulated in parliament, manifestos and at party conventions is limited. It terms of parliament, the study has shown that people feel that their MPs are not accessible to engage them before taking issues to parliament. On party manifestos, which are important platforms that parties use to influence government policies, the research has shown that the majority of party members are left out of the design processes of the manifestos. It is clear that the formulation of manifestos in parties is handled by a few senior party officials. In addition, the study has shown that party members do not participate substantively in influencing the agenda and resolutions of party conventions. The fact

that the majority of the members are not consulted by their representatives on the issues discussed at the conventions means that they are denied the opportunity to influence both the selection of their national leaders and the policies enacted at the conventions.

It is because of the limited opportunities to make their voices heard on party policies that the majority of those interviewed said their parties do not involve them in their decision making. The implication is that party policies, which are used to influence public policies, are largely a product of a few people in parties. This means the majority of their members are powerless actors in the processes that the ideal of democracy empowers them to influence.

The findings also suggest that the presence of formal institutions in political parties does not guarantee that people's participation in the decisions parties make will be institutionalised. Although the constitutions of both MCP and UDF present party conventions as the supreme decision making organs in the parties, where members affect the policies and selection of party leaders, the study has shown that the majority of party members do not influence the content and direction of the issues discussed at the conventions.

CHAPTER SIX

LOCAL PARTY ACTIVISM

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the mechanisms that political parties use to engage with their members at the constituency level on both local and national party issues. The idea is to assess whether such mechanisms afford party members adequate room to undertake meaningful participation on party policy matters. The chapter also discusses the major party activities that members participate at their local branches.

6.1 Participation Mechanisms and Party Activism

An analysis of the data from FGDs, key informants and the survey shows that there is a two-track communication process in the country's political parties, each one used for different levels of issues. For national party policies and issues, it is apparent that political rallies are the main means that parties use to engage with their members while local party meetings are used mostly for discussing area or constituency issues. This idea is given further credence by the finding that the agenda at most local party meetings revolves around area or constituency issues. Over 80 percent of key informants indicated that political rallies are the major platform that parties use to consult or involve ordinary members on issues that touch on the party as a whole. Asked whether rallies are effective

in helping ordinary members shape party policies as the communication is usually one-way, some key informants argued that ordinary members are able to participate using their local leaders by contributing to '*malonje*'. In short, '*malonje*' are the issues that local party leaders present to visiting senior leaders at a rally in the speeches they make. The argument by many key party officials is that before compiling the *malonje* for presentation at the rallies, local party leaders consult widely among themselves and with ordinary members in their areas. However, data from FGDs and questionnaire survey paints a different picture altogether as the vast majority of the respondents said they have never been consulted on the issue. From the point of view of the survey, about 84 percent of the respondents said that they have never been consulted by party leaders on the issues to be presented during *malonje*.

The idea that political rallies are the dominant mechanism for participation in parties is also confirmed by the fact that about 60 percent of the respondents who said that their parties consult them indicated that the party does so through rallies. Some key informants admitted that rallies are very limited as avenues for involving members in party policies because "at rallies they come to listen to us."[36] Given their clear deficit as forums for people's participation, the fact that they continue to dominate party participation processes raises questions about the commitment of political parties to the idea of quality popular participation in their policy making. This lends weight to the argument by elite theorists that in spite of its celebrated potential as a system of government that empowers citizens to influence their party policies and, consequently, government policies, in a democracy the power to make policy decisions resides in a few (Janda et al, 1998). Given that parties in Malawi predominantly revolve around their leaders and a few founder

[36] Interview with MCP NEC member, August, 2008.

members (Patel and Meinhadt, 2003), it is not surprising that participation spaces for ordinary members are limited.

When asked to rate the frequency at which party leaders hold meetings in their areas when there are no elections coming up, about 90 percent of the respondents said party meetings are very rare during the period, an issue that also arose at almost all FGDs. The statements below from ordinary party members illustrate people's feelings on the issue.

"These people [party leaders] only come here during election campaign."[37]

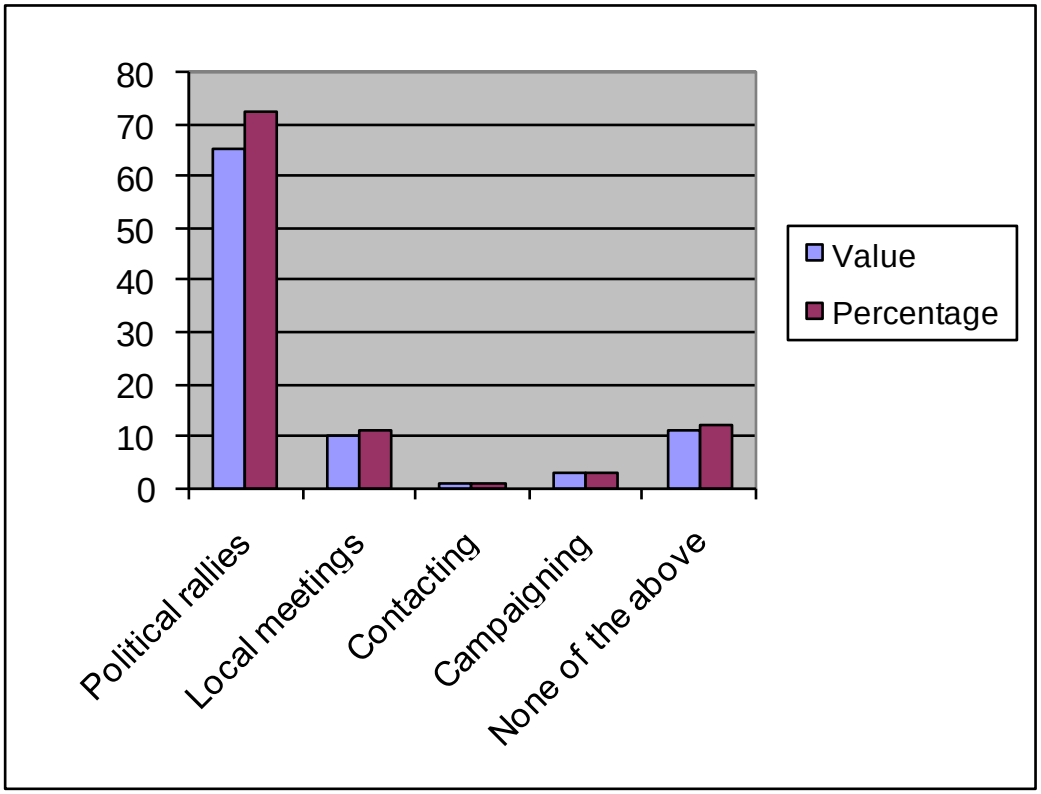
"Once elections are over, our leaders never hold meetings in the area."[38]

What this means is that from the position of both the quality and quantity, it is very doubtful if rallies are effective platforms for people's participation. Their limitations notwithstanding, it would appear that the majority of party members prefer attending rallies than local meetings, as the table below shows.

[37]Interview with MCP member at Maenje Village, TA Mazengera, in Lilongwe Mpenu Constituency on November 11, 2008.

[38] Interview with DPP member, on November 20, 2008.

Figure 3: Activities Party Members Engage In at the Local Level



As captured by table 5, the data from the questionnaire survey shows that about 72 percent of the respondents attend political rallies, against only 11 percent who said they attend meetings in their local areas. Also, about 12 percent of the respondents said they do not participate in party activities. This level of political activism and the preference for rallies undermine people's ability to engage meaningfully with their political leaders and utilise their parties as vehicles that can link them with government.

Viewed from the context of the finding that most party members feel that their parties do not give them the opportunity to influence their policies, this level of apathy could be an indication of withdrawal on the part of the ordinary members. The fact that they concentrate on local issues at their area meetings could also mean that they feel that

discussing higher order issues cannot make any difference to the policies that their parties pursue at the national level. Returning to the theories of political participation, the resources model appears to explain this level of participation, especially viewed from its argument that where people do not feel that their voice matters in politics they tend to develop a low sense of political efficacy (Harrigan, 1991), which then retards their participation.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, findings on decision making in political parties do not support the study by Kadzamira *et al* (1998) where parties claimed that they provide effective mechanisms for their members at the local and constituency level to articulate their positions on party policies. It is clear that opportunities for ordinary party members at the constituency level to influence their party's policies are limited by the nature of the means parties use to communicate with their members and the fact that people's participation in the activities of their parties at the local areas is low. All this undermines the spirit expressed by Scarrow (2005:13) that:

> "when members are included in formal and informal discussions of party policies and in the selection of candidates, it fosters links between party leaders and the party's key supporters. In this way, members may enhance the linkage function that is generally attributed to parties."

Another important point to raise is that, as Chandhoke (2009) argues, participation and representation are inseparably linked that it is difficult to discuss one without making reference to the other. In this case, this level of participation in the processes of shaping

party policies raises questions about who party leaders represent when articulating their positions on government policies. Chandhoke (2009: 821) had this in mind when he argued that “The paradox of contemporary democracies is constituted by the disjuncture between democracy and representation.” In the larger scheme of things, this defeats the rationale for the processes of political linkage, which that political parties exist primarily to connect citizens with their government.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES AND LOCAL PARTY MEETINGS

7.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate whether public policy issues are given priority at the meetings that party members hold at their local structures. The argument is that for parties to be robust linkage institutions, discussion of public policy issues should constitute an important item at all levels of the party.

7.1 The Place of Public Policy Issues at Party Meetings

The data drawn from FGDs shows that both exclusively party issues and public policy matters constitute the agenda of meetings at the local structures of political parties. At all the nine FGDs participants indicated that when they meet they sometimes discuss issues to do with community development needs with the express aim of conveying the same to their MP who should in turn take them up with government. Where the picture starts to change is on whether people view public policy issues as priority items for discussion. What comes out clearly from the study is that exclusively party issues receive overwhelming priority at party meetings. In the questionnaire survey, about 70 percent of the respondents who indicated that they attend meetings at the local level said the

meetings they attend attach significant importance to issues to do with strengthening their parties by, among other strategies, promoting party unity, encouraging one another as party members and helping one another on personal problems. These issues, according to both FGDs and the survey, are given more prominence than other matters, including those that centre on public policy.

This finding illuminates quite significantly on people's perceptions of the importance of purely party issues vis-à-vis public policy matters. The main reason respondents cited for prioritising party issues is that they want to make the party strong. On the other hand, others said it is not them but their leaders at the local level who decide what to discuss. This tallies with the fact that almost all respondents who said they attend party meetings at the local level indicated that it is their leaders who initiate meetings and decide the issues to be discussed.

Does this mean people feel that strengthening the party is an inherently more important issue than influencing government policies? The responses they provided on their ability to influence public policies sheds some light on the issue. Generally, the dominant issue that arose on this question in terms of both FGDs and the questionnaire survey is that the majority of the respondents feel that they do not have the power to shape government policies. In quantitative terms, this is represented by about 52 percent of the respondents in the survey who indicated that they are powerless actors in public policy issues. The majority of those who took this view said that they do not think government can listen to ordinary people like them, followed by those who said their MP is not accessible. For those who said they can influence government policies, the majority (65 percent) said they can do so through their MP. This compares well with the findings

of the 1999 Afrobarometer survey which found that among those who indicated to have contacted public officials, 52 percent of them had contacted their MPs. The rest of the responses on this issue were scattered, in insignificant terms, on other party officials, traditional leaders, voting and engaging policy makers directly. However, despite indicating that they can influence government policies, about 18 percent of the respondents who took this view said they do not know how they can do this. If they feel that they can shape government policies but at the same time say that they don't know how they can do this, one wonders where they draw the confidence that government policies are within their reach. In the absence of a clear response on how they feel they can do this, it would be fair to say that this category leans more towards those who said they cannot influence government policies. This raises the 'can't influence' category to about 70 percent of the sample.

Linked to the above is the finding in the two opposition constituencies where participants at both FGDs and the survey said that their inability to influence government policies is largely because government favours areas that have DPP MPs.

In terms of the questionnaire survey, about 75 percent of MCP and UDF respondents said their constituencies are failing to develop because government is prioritising DPP constituents. The comments below by ordinary UDF members reflect this perception.

> *"There is tit-for-tat politics in Malawi and those in opposition suffer. The party is an effective channel linking people with government only when you are in the ruling party. On subsidised fertiliser, government favours DPP members at the expense of those in opposition."*[39]

[39] Interview with UDF member at Chibwana area in the Blantyre City West Constituency on December 28, 2008.

"With our party in opposition, we are now like step-children, unlike in the past when we had our biological father."[40]

In the MCP constituency, there was a prominent argument that the scarcity of farm input subsidy vouchers in the area was a result of the fact that their party is in opposition. They argued that in constituencies where there is a DPP MP or a prominent DPP official, people received enough quantities of subsidy input materials like fertiliser. This is reflected in the following comments made by some of the respondents in the questionnaire survey.

"Farmers' clubs don't discriminate when distributing coupons. This will prevent government from discriminating against us in opposition as they are doing now."[41]

How far this argument holds empirically it is not clear. Suffice to say that in politics perceptions play a very important role in influencing people's understanding of and reaction to issues.

From the point of view of DPP members, respondents at FGDs and in the survey said that having an MP who is in government does not give them an inherent advantage in terms of influencing government policies. The major argument they raised for this position was that their MP was not accessible as he rarely held meetings in the area. This, they said, denied them the opportunity to articulate issues to government. However, on further questioning, the respondents said that, in principle, having a government MP is

[40] Interview with UDF member at Nancholi in the Blantyre City West Constituency on December 8, 2008.

[41] Interview with MCP member at Muzu Village, T/A Mazengera, in Lilongwe Mpenu Constituency on November 26, 2008.

supposed to give them an advantage in terms of linking up with government through the MP. What this means is that people's perceptions are that, ideally, when a party is in government areas that have government MPs benefit more in a wide range of issues than opposition constituencies. Viewed at this level, it means that the sentiments expressed by DPP members was largely a protest against their MP than a stand against the ideal that distance with government influences access to the benefits of public policy

When this issue was taken up in one-on-one interviews with ordinary party members, the picture exhibited is that of a convergence towards this thinking. The data shows that about 60 percent of DPP ordinary members agreed with the statement that being in government gives them an advantage in terms of influencing government programmes, while 40 percent took the view that there is no difference where you lie on the political divide. The comment below, one of the many comments elicited in one-on-one interviews with DPP members, demonstrates this dynamic.

> *"As a party in government, we have direct links with government officials. The problem is the MP. He is never here to ask us on what we need."*[42]

What the foregoing discussion demonstrates is that people generally feel that there are serious linkage problems in their parties and that this severely constrains their ability to take up issues with government. The common denominator across the board is the MP; either he or she is not accessible as is the case with the DPP constituency or the legislator is powerless, at least in their view, since the constituency has an opposition MP.

[42] Interview with DPP member at Mponda Galauka Village, T/A Chikowi, in the Zomba Thondwe Constituency on November 30, 2008.

The inadequacy of linkage processes as the probable explanation for the high visibility of largely party issues at the expense of public policy matters is supported by the evidence that, by and large, people generally view political parties as agents that should link them with government, mainly on development issues in communities such as construction of bridges, boreholes, roads and policies on agriculture. By extension, it would be reasonable to expect this understanding of political parties to be reflected in the way that people use them from the local to the national level. As a starting point for using parties for linkage purposes, members would be expected to discuss public policy matters at their local branches and then take them up with the MP and other party officials.

Table 3: People's Understanding of the Functions of Political Parties

Function	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Linking people with government on community issues	41	46
Promoting national unity	11	12
Proving oversight over government	8	9
Framework for electing national leaders	7	8
Initiating development projects in communities	3	3
Providing leadership on community issues	3	3
Taking care of people's welfare	2	2
Providing alternative leadership	1	1
Defending their members	1	1
Making and safeguarding a country's laws	1	1
Providing employment and other opportunities to	1	1

loyalists		
Platform for conducting politics	1	1
I don't know	10	11

It is also worth highlighting that apart from the fact that these issues are mainly party in nature, they are also, by and large, local issues. Even those who indicated that they discuss development issues at their party meetings said such matters largely concern the community. This significant bias towards community issues could offer some explanation for the finding by Khaila and Nthinda (2002) that Malawians do not participate at higher levels of politics. The argument is that if they view politics and development almost exclusively from the platform of community issues, their ability to use political parties for higher order issues is severely limited. The data on Parliament also backs up this position in the sense that about 92 percent of the respondents who indicated to have been consulted by their MP on parliamentary matters said the consultations centre on community development issues. In addition, the 2005 Afrobarometer study showed that Malawians contact leaders mainly to tell them about community or public problem, as evidenced by 60 percent of those who had made contacts or 32 percent of sample, while 3 percent of those who made contacts contacted an influential person to present their views on political issues. In addition, the 2008 survey also confirms this finding as over 90 percent of those who indicated to have contacted a public official like an MP said they did so to present a community problem.

Table 4: Issues People are Consulted On by Their MPs

NATURE OF ISSUES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
National issues	2	8
Community development issues	23	92

The bottom line is that while people might be able to influence government policies on issues to do with their communities, their capacity to influence the superstructure that underpins the design and implementation of such policies is very limited. To borrow from literature on international political economy, the findings show that ordinary party members lack the structural power to set "the rules of the game," something that can only happen if they are able to articulate and advance issues beyond their immediate vicinity, besides having the power to shape party policies.

7.2 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that discussion of public policy issues at the local structures of political parties is very low. Party members focus almost entirely on local party issues because they argue that they want to strengthen their parties. But further interrogation of the issue has demonstrated that ordinary people feel that they do not have the power to influence government policies. This has the effect of blunting the ability of political parties as linkage institution in democracy.

This argument becomes even sharper when viewed against the background that even those public policy issues that people discuss at such meetings are largely confined to their communities, leaving many broader and important issues that impact on their lives. Admittedly, the fact that people discuss does not necessarily mean that they will be able to influence the ultimate decision on the same, tackilng the issue serves as a starting point for influencing its shape, content and direction.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.0 Introduction

The main objective of this study was to investigate whether political parties in Malawi are reliable institutions for linking people with government. This was pursued by examining decision making processes in political parties, people's participation in the activities of their parties at the local structures and the importance they attach to public policy issues in their meetings at the local level. The first chapter of the thesis set the background to the study by providing the context and the problem the research sought to address. The chapter also discussed the methodology used in the study. Chapter two discussed the major concept on which the study is built. The chapter argued that political participation lies at the heart of democratic politics and that for people to participate meaningfully in the policies that government formulates, there is need for strong and democratic linkage institutions like political parties that should act as bridges between citizens and their governors. The chapter also presented and discussed the agent model of representation as the theoretical framework guiding the study.

Chapter three analysed decision making in political parties in Malawi using parliament, party manifestos and conventions as the areas of focus. Chapter four presented and discussed findings on people's participation in the activities of their parties at the local branches and the main mechanisms that parties use to engage with their members at the national and local levels. Chapter four discussed findings of the study on the significance people attach to public policy issues at the meetings they hold at the local level of their parties.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the conclusion to the study by picking out the major issues that emerged from the research. The chapter then discusses the implications of the findings on the idea of political representation. The last section of the chapter presents and discusses areas for further research.

8.1 Malawi's Political Parties and Linkage Function: Back to the Drawing Board

The study has demonstrated that political parties in Malawi, as crucially important institutions in a democracy, are limited actors as avenues for ordinary citizens' influence on government policies. Using the analysis of decision making, local party activism and issue prioritisation as tools for measuring political parties' potential as forums for political participation, the study has shown that there are glaring deficits in the country's parties on the three dimensions. While traditionally the focus on participation in political parties has tended to be on decision making (Meinhardt and Patel (2003), the exploration of the other two dimensions by the study has broadened the scope for analysing the phenomenon.

From the point of view of decision making, the findings demonstrate that the celebrated potential of party conventions, Parliament and manifestoes as viable participation forums for a country's citizens is largely a mirage as the decision making styles in these institutions leave out the majority of ordinary party members. In the case of Parliament, not only is a culture of consultation almost non-existent, but also in the few instances where MPs consult ordinary citizens on parliamentary issues, it is mostly on narrow community development issues, ignoring that, by and large, parliament handles issues that have implications that go beyond the confines of local settings. All this points to the fact that parliamentary agenda is largely an elitist process, with insignificant contributions from the large majority of the population.

The same applies to manifestoes, which are important decision-making and agenda setting platforms, as the majority of ordinary party members do not have the room to make their input before the final document is produced. While it is acknowledged that some of the issues in manifestoes are well beyond some ordinary party members in terms of their technical sophistication, there are a wide range of issues that many ordinary members can competently articulate. To say that manifestoes are too complicated for ordinary members is to assume that they do not know what they want, which is incorrect.

As argued in the discussion on conventions, these forums, in theory, hold a lot of potential for empowering party members to make their contributions towards party leadership and policies. However, the poor quality of representation, marked by lack of consultations by people's ambassadors to the conventions, means that the rank and file in the parties are, by and large, only peripheral players in the process of shaping the decisions made there. The key to remedying the situation is for parties to embrace the

spirit of consultation, by, among other things, ensuring that way before a convention is held party structures are utilised to disseminate relevant information to the members on the issues to be processed at the convention, including the list of people contesting for various positions in the party. This would help ordinary members to interact more meaningfully with their representatives on the stand they should take on the various issues at the conventions.

In terms of participation mechanisms in political parties, the fact that rallies are the main means that parties use to communicate with their members on higher level issues means that opportunities for the members to meaningfully participate in making party policies are minimal. This, as highlighted by Tsoka (2002), limits people's participation as the communication process is largely one way. On the issue of activism at local party meetings, it is ironical that while the majority of the people said parties exist mainly to connect them with government on community issues, many of them shun the forums that would potentially offer them more opportunities to express themselves on such matters. Perhaps the feeling that their parties do not give them the opportunities to contribute to broader policies accounts for this inertia. This level of local party activism is far too low to effectively work as a springboard for people's participation in influencing their parties' policies and, by extension, government programmes.

The argument also extends to the findings on the narrow focus on mostly party issues at the meetings party members hold at their local level. This constrains people's ability to influence public policy issues that mean more to their communities than the pure party issues that they dwell on. The implication of all this is that members do not adequately use their parties to make their voices heard to the people that make government policies.

8.2 Implications of the Study Findings on Representation

The implication of the finding that people do not participate meaningfully in the decisions that their parties make undermines claims by political parties that they are people's representatives. This conclusion draws from the argument by Chandhoke (2009:19) that in a representative democracy "participation and representation are constitutive of each other. Without participatory democracy, representatives have immense power to act, as they will, without let or hindrance. Without some mechanism of representation, participatory citizenship is of little practical import." What this means is that you can only talk about genuine representation if political parties, which are the most important institutions in a democracy, provide adequate room for their members to influence the decisions they make.

Granted, elections provide some basis for the legitimacy of representation, but as Verba (1967) and Magolowondo (2007) argue, democratic politics entails that in between elections there should be mechanisms that link people with their governors. The idea is that elections are not enough as a basis for legitimacy because the hallmark of a democratic polity is that citizens should be able to influence the decisions that their government make mainly through linkage institutions such as political parties. This is the point that Johari (2005) raises when he says that the main function of parties is "to create a substantive connection between rulers and the ruled."

In the final analysis, what this means is that in Malawi people's ability to influence government policies through political parties is very limited.

8.3 Areas for Further Study

8.3.1 Interaction Between Formal and Informal Institutions in Political Parties

An analysis of the interaction between formal and informal institutions in political parties would illuminate on the extent to which formal institutions can be relied on as a guide on how parties work and make decisions. The study could revolve around the issue of how power stakes in political parties affect the reliability of the formal rules contained in party constitutions and other key documents that purport to guide the parties in their decision making.

8.3.2 The Impact of Salience on Issue Prioritisation in Parties

This study has shown that public policy issues are not given prominence by party members at their local meetings. A study on issue salience will help to determine if the prominence of policy issues at the national level also means that party members attach significant importance to the issue at their local level. The question is: Could there be some public policy issues that break the dominance of party issues at the meetings of members at their local meetings? If such issues are there, what is it about them that makes people discuss them more than they do with other public policy issues? The input subsidy programme, which has been a salient issue at the national level, could be used as a case study.

8.3.3 The Strength of Party Structures as a Framework for Participation

The constitutions of MCP, UDF and DPP lay out the configuration of their party structures, from the lowest level to the national convention as the highest organ. A study on party structures will cast light on their strength and reliability as mechanisms for people's participation in the decisions and activities of their parties. The study could also examine the linkages among the structures and how power flows affect the participation of party members at different levels of the structures.

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APPENDIX 1
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ORDINARY PARTY MEMBERS

SECTION A: ORDINARY PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

1. Do you feel an ordinary person like yourself has the power to influence what government does?

A. YES

B. NO

2. If your response to the question above is YES, say how you can do this.

A. Through our MP

B. Using other party officials

C. Through traditional leaders

D. We can engage government officials directly

E. Through voting

F. Any other [Specify]

G. I don't know

H. Not applicable

3. If your response to the question is NO, why is that the case?

SECTION B: PARTICIPATION IN PARTIES

1. In your opinion, what are the functions of political parties?

2. Do you think political parties in Malawi have performed on the function (s) you have mentioned?

A. YES

B. NO

C. Not applicable

3. Do you think it is necessary for you as an ordinary party member to give your opinions on what your party does?

A. YES

B. NO

C. I DON'T KNOW

4. If YES, why do you think so?

5. If NO, why do you take this view?

6. Does your party give you the opportunity to offer your opinions on what it does?

A. YES

B. NO

7. If your response to the question above is YES, do you have examples of party policies where your views were sought?

A.YES [Specify]

B. NO

C. Not applicable

8. If your party seeks your views on its policies, what mechanisms does it use to do this?

A. Rallies

B. Branch or area meetings

C. Constituency meetings

D. Door-to-door meetings

E. Any other [Specify]

F. Not applicable

9. Do your party officials hold meetings in the area when it is not election time?

A. YES

B. NO

10. If the answer to the question above is YES, mention the party officials who address these meetings.

A. Branch/Area leaders

B. Constituency officials

C. MP

D. District/Regional/National leaders

E. Not applicable

11. If they hold meetings, what kind of meetings are these?

A. Political rallies

B. Area/Branch meetings

C. Door to door meetings

D. Constituency meetings

E. Not applicable

12. How often do the officials hold these meetings?

A. Frequently

B. Occasionally

C. Not applicable

13. At political rallies, local party officials present 'Malonje' to visiting party leaders? Have you ever contributed ideas to the 'malonje'?

A. YES

B. NO

14. If the response to the question above is NO, do you know the person/people who produce items for 'malonje'?

A. YES [Mention the people]

B. YES

C. I don't know

D. Not applicable.

15. Do you know the people occupying the following positions at the branch, area and constituency levels?

A. Branch: (1) Chairman [**YES/NO]**, (2) Secretary **[YES/NO]** (3) Treasurer **[YES/NO].**

B. Area: (1) Chairman **[YES/NO]** (2) Secretary **[YES/NO]** (3) Treasurer **[YES/NO]**.

C. Constituency: (1) Chairman **[YES/NO]** (2) Secretary **[YES/NO]** (3) Treasurer **[YES/NO]**.

16. Do you know when elections for these leaders are held?

A. YES

B. NO

17. Have you ever participated in these elections?

A.YES

B.NO

18. Which of the following activities do you engage in as a member of the party?

A. Attending political rallies

B. Attending party meetings at branch/area levels

C. Contacting party officials

D. Writing letters to party officials

E. Organising party events like rallies and other meetings

E. Campaigning for the party

G. Helping the party financially and materially

19. If you attend branch and area meetings, how often do you attend them?

D. Most of them

E. Many of them

C. Few of them

D. Not applicable

20. Who initiates such meetings?

.

A. Branch/Area officials

.

B. Constituency leaders

C Anyone can do so

D. District/regional officials

E. Not applicable

21. Who decides the issues to be discussed at these meetings?

A. Branch/Area officials

B. Constituency leaders

C. Anyone can do so

D. District/regional officials

E. Not applicable

22. What issues do you usually discuss at the meetings?

23. Why do you discuss the item above more often than other issues?

24. Are everybody's views respected at the meetings?

A. YES

B. NO

C. Not applicable

SECTION C: PARTY AFFILIATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

1. Does the fact that your MP/party is in opposition put you at a disadvantage in terms of influencing government policies? [For UDF/MCP members].

   A. YES [Explain]

   B. NO

   C. Not applicable

2. Does the fact that your MP belongs to a ruling party give you an advantage in terms of influencing government policies? [For DPP members]

   A. YES [Explain]

   B. NO [Explain]

   C. Not applicable

SECTION D: DECISION MAKING

A. MANIFESTO

1. Do you know what a manifesto is?
   A. YES

   B. NO

2. If the response above is YES, do you know whether your party has a manifesto?
   A. YES

   B. NO

   C. Not applicable

3. Do you know the processes leading up to the formulation of a manifesto in your party?

A. YES

B. NO

C. Not applicable

4. Have you ever contributed ideas to your party's manifesto?
   A. YES

   B. NO

   C. Not applicable

5. If the response above is YES, how do you make your contribution to the manifesto?

   A. Rallies

   B. Letters to party officials

   C. Branch/area meetings

   D. By contacting branch/area/constituency leaders

   E.Any other [Specify]

   F. Not applicable

6. If you don't contribute ideas to the manifesto, do you know the people in your party who handle the process?

   A. YES

   B. NO

7. Did you contribute ideas for the party's 2004 election manifesto? [UDF and MCP members].

   A. YES

   B. NO

   C. Not applicable

B. **CONVENTION**

1. Do you know what a convention is?
   A. YES

   B. NO

2. Do you know when the party last held a convention?
   A. YES

   B. NO

   C. Not applicable

3. Do you know the people who represent you at the convention?
   A. YES

   B. NO

   C. Not applicable

4. If you know the representatives, do they seek your views on the position they should take on different issues at the convention?

   A. YES

   B. NO

   C. Not applicable

5. If they seek your views, how do they do this?

   A. Through rallies

   B. Door to door meetings

   C. We write letters

   D. At branch/area/constituency meetings

   E. Any other [Specify]

   F. Not applicable
6. Before the convention is held, do you have information on the people contesting for different positions at the forum?

   A. YES

B. NO

C. Not applicable

7. If YES, how do you access this information?

.

A. Through rallies

B. Door to door meetings

C. At branch and area meetings

D. From the radio

E. Television

F. Any other [Specify]

G. Not applicable

C. PARLIAMENT

1. Do you follow proceedings in Parliament?

A. YES

B. NO

2. If you do, what means do you use to do this?

A. Radio

B. Television

C. Newspapers

D. Through friends and relatives

E. Not applicable

3. Before your MP goes to Parliament, does he/she seek your views on the issues to be tackled in the House?

A. YES

B. NO

4. If you are consulted, on what issues are your views sought?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS EXERCISE.

APPENDIX 2

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INCUMBENT MP

DATE OF THE INTERVIEW:

NAME OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

On participation in political parties

1. What do you think are the main functions of a political party?

2. How do you rate your party's performance on the function (s) you have mentioned?

3. Do you think it is necessary for ordinary party members to have a say on what the party does?

4. Do your party members in the constituency have a say on the position you as their MP and other leaders in the constituency take on party issues and policies?

5. If you don't give them the opportunity, why is that the case?

6. If you give them the opportunity, what mode (s) of interaction do you use to engage them?

7. Do you think these methods of consultation are effective?

8. If no, have you devised alternative platforms having realised that the mechanisms you use are not effective?

9. How often do you hold meetings in the constituency when it is not election time?

10. What kind of meetings are these?

11. Being in government, do you think this gives you an advantage in terms of influencing government policies, especially with regard to constituency issues?

Parliament

1. Before you go to Parliament, do you engage your constituents on the position you should take on a wide range of issues in the House?

2. If you do, what means of consultations do you use to do this?

3. Generally, on what issues do you consult your constituents?

4. If you don't, why is that the case?

5. Before Parliament convenes for a sitting, your party holds a caucus where it takes a position on crucial issues to be tackled in the House. How much space is there for you as an MP to convey your constituents' views on the issues?

6. Do these views, if you express them, matter in terms of the stand that the party eventually takes?

General decision making

1. Generally, what is the pattern of decision making in the party? Top down or bottom up?

2. In situations where the party passes instructions down to the constituency, is there room for contrary views from you and party members in the constituency?

3. Do you feel party leaders from district to national levels respect the opinions of ordinary party members in the constituency?

4. In which areas should the party improve to enhance people's participation in public policy issues?

Convention

1. Before the convention is held, do you know the issues to be discussed at the forum?

2. If no, why is that the case?

3. If you know the issues, do you consult your constituents on the position you should take on issues tackled at the convention?

4. If you consult them, how do you do this?

5. Do you think people in your constituency are able to influence the decisions made at the convention, including elections of party leaders?

Manifesto

1. Do you know the processes leading up to the production of a manifesto in your party?

2. If no, why is that the case?

3. If yes, who are the people that contribute ideas to the manifesto?
4. Do party members in the constituency have the opportunity to contribute ideas to the manifesto?

APPENDIX 3

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DISTRICT, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEADERS

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:

POSITION IN THE PARTY:

INTERVIEW SITE:

A. Participation processes in political parties

1. What mechanisms do you use to engage ordinary party members on:

(A) Constituency issues
(B) National issues

2. Do you think these avenues are effective in helping ordinary party members to shape the decisions made on these issues?

3. In your assessment, do the party structures from branch to national level generally help ordinary party members to influence party and government policies? Provide examples.

5. What is your assessment of the level of political activism among your members at all levels of the party as reflected by their attendance of party meetings?

6. Your party is on record to have told the media that the party does not have structures that can be used as a basis for mobilising members for a convention. In such a scenario, what means does the party use to gauge your member's views on party policy? [DPP].

7. Does the fact that you are in government give you an edge over opposition parties in terms of linking your members with government policy makers? Give examples. [DPP].

8. Does the fact that you are in opposition put you at a disadvantage in terms of influencing government policies? Provide examples. [MCP and UDF].

B. Convention

1. Before the convention is held, do you know the issues to be discussed at the forum?

2. If no, why is that the case?

3. If you know the issues, do you consult ordinary party members on the position you should take on issues tackled at the convention?

4. If you consult them, how do you do this?

5. In your opinion, do ordinary party members contribute to the decisions made at the convention, including elections of party leaders?

C. Manifesto

1. Do you know the processes leading up to the production of a manifesto in your party?

2. If no, why is that the case?

3. If yes, who are the people that contribute ideas to the manifesto?

4. Do ordinary party members have the opportunity to contribute ideas to the manifesto?

5. If they do, how do they do this?

D. General decision making

1. Does your party have a guiding framework that anchors the issue of how you present your stand in the media on various issues?

2. If no, what basis does the party's spokesperson use to take a position on issues?

3. Are there any cases where party officials routinely override the powers vested at different levels of the party structures?

4. What is the general decision-making style in the party? Bottom-up or top-bottom?

APPENDIX 4
LIST OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES

INTERVIEWEE	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Mr Kennedy Makwangwala	UDF	Secretary General
Dr Heatherwick Ntaba	DPP	Publicity Secretary
Mr Portiphar Chidaya	MCP	Administrative Secretary
Mr David Kambalame	UDF	District Governor (Lilongwe Rural)
Mr Betson Majoni	MCP	Secretary General
Mr Ishmael Chafukira	MCP	Spokesperson on Parliamentary Affairs
Mr Focus Chiwalo	DPP	Constituency Vice-Organising Secretary (Zomba Thondwe)
Mr Twaliki	DPP	District Governor (Zomba Urban)
Mr Selenje	DPP	MP, Zomba Thondwe and Regional Secretary for the Eastern Region
Mr Makala Ngozo	MCP	MP, Lilongwe Mpenu and Deputy Treasurer General
Mr Elias Dzundi	MCP	Constituency Treasurer (Lilongwe Mpenu)
Mrs Dorothy Chirambo	MCP	Director of Women Affairs
Mr H Kayimbe	MCP	District Chairman (Lilongwe Rural East)
Mr Frank Mkwezalamba	MCP	District Secretary
Mr Harry Mandala	DPP	Constituency Secretary General (Zomba Thondwe)
Mr George Namame	DPP	Constituency governor (Zomba Thondwe)
Mrs Aggrey Loidi	DPP	Constituency Governess (Zomba Thondwe)
Mr H Mlomo	MCP	Central Region Deputy Regional Governor
Mr MacDonald Symon	UDF	Southern Region Governor
Mr Huphrey Mvula	UDF	Director of Research
Mr Lingson Belekanyama	MCP	Director of Research
Mr Divelius Zaipa	MCP	Central Region Committee Member
Mr Peter Mkangadza	UDF	Zone Governor (Blantyre West Constituency)
Mr John Kaiyatsa	UDF	Director of Research (Blantyre West Constituency)
Mrs Banda	UDF	Central Region Committee Member
Mr David Chilembwe	MCP	Lilongwe Mpenu Constituency Chairman
Mr Chimwemwe Luwemba	UDF	Central Region Secretary
Mr John Banda	UDF	Central Region Governor
Mr Eric Chiwaya	UDF	Blantyre District Governor
Miss Mary Thomson	UDF	Southern Region Organising Secretary
Mr Bikitoni Chikosa	MCP	Constituency Secretary
Mr Ephraim Chakudza	UDF	Deputy District Secretary for Blantyre District
Reverend Chande Mhone	UDF	Region Governor for Vipsya
Mr Nicholas Dausi	DPP	Publicity Secretary
Dr Blessings Chinsinga	Chancellor College, University of Malawi	Senior Lecturer, Department of Political and Administrative Studies
Mr Henry Chingaipe	University of York	PhD student in Political Science and former lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Chancellor College
Mr Steven Bamusi	DPP	Eastern Region Deputy Treasurer
Mrs Eunice Mereka	DPP	Eastern Region Deputy Organising Secretary
Mrs Magret Sangeni	DPP	Zomba District Governess