THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs) IN THE EDUCATION POLICY PROCESS IN MALAWI

MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)

By

PHILEMON NDOLO
Bed-University of Malawi

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DECLARATION

I, **Philemon Ndolo** declare that the work presented in this dissertation is the product of my own effort. All work from other sources have been indicated and acknowledged.

PHILEMON NDOLO

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Full Legal Name

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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 _____

Joseph Chimombo, PhD (Professor)

Main Supervisor

Signature _____ Date_____

Ken Ndala, PhD (Senior Lecturer)

Second Supervisor

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the unfailing love and support of my wife Victoria, children, brothers and sisters, family and friends who through various ways provided the invaluable moral, spiritual and academic support.

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ABSTRACT

The study explored how civil society organisations participate in education policy process (policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) in Malawi. The study used Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation to understand participation of CSOs in education policy process in addition to key-informant interviews to hear policy actors' experiences, views and perceptions on CSOs' roles in policy process. Results show that policy actors have not yet streamlined structures currently in use for policy making in the sector. CSOs are involved in education policy making/formulation exclusively through SWAp policy structures and are left out in MoEST management structures, where final decisions to pass or enact policy are made. CSOs are largely involved through consultations in TWGs, and ESWG. Within the policy process, CSOs feature more in first two stages (problem definition/agenda setting and constructing the policy alternatives/ policy formulation) and last two stages (implementation and monitoring and evaluation) but are absent in choice of solution/selection of preferred policy option and policy design stages. Although CSOs felt they influence policy, DPs and Ministry policy actors felt that they were ineffective. The key challenges that prevent CSOs' meaningful participation in education policy process were animosity and mistrust between them and mainly MoEST policy actors, CSOs' inadequate representativeness in policy structures and insufficient funds for doing independent research to generate evidence to inform their policy position. CSOs' participation in the education policy process is tokenistic and largely for legitimation than equal partnership in policy dialogue.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACEM	Association of Christian Educators in Malawi
BEDC	Basic Education Development Committee
CARE	CARE International Malawi.
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSCQBE	Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAPP	Development Assistance from People to People
DAS	Development Assistance Strategy
DfiD	Department for International development
DP	Development Partner
EDMU	Education Development Implementation and Management Unit
EDSSS	Education Delivery Secondary School Survey
EFA	Education for All
ESIP	Education Sector Implementation Plan
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group (same as SWG)
FAWEMA	Forum for African Women Educationalists in Malawi
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaftfür Internationale Zusammenarbeit
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
ISAMA	Independent Schools Association of Malawi
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LINK	Link Community Development
MASPA	Malawi Schools' Parents Association
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy

MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MZUNI	Mzuzu University
NSTED	National Strategy on Teacher Education
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PIF	Policy and Investment Framework
PLAN Mw	Plan International Malawi
POW	Programme of Works
PRISAM	Private Schools Association of Malawi
PRODEC	Processes of the National Education Sector Program
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SEST	Secretary for Education, Science and Technology
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
SWG	Sector Working Group
TCM	Technical Committee on Education Management
TEN/MET	Tanzanian Education Network / Mtandowa Elimu Tanzania
ToRs	Terms of Reference
TILIPO	Teachers Living Positively with HIV and AIDS
TTC	Teachers Training College
TUM	Teachers' Union of Malawi

TWG	Technical Working Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children Education Fund
UNIMA	University of Malawi
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Education plays a catalytic role in the socioeconomic development of any nation and it is generally recognised that many partners are necessary to accomplish this task. Civil Society Organisations (CSO), for long regarded as primarily service providers are key in that partnership. Civil society organisations in Malawi especially faith based organisations such as mission agencies have been involved in the education sector since the 19th century, particularly running schools that provided formal and non-formal education (Kadzamira & Kunje, 2002). The missionaries dictated the policies such as curriculum without the Africans having any say. They noted that during Dr. Banda's rule in the post-colonial period, many civil society organisations were not allowed to operate in the country because of his intolerance for divergent views. NGOs were not allowed to thrive except faith based organisations that provided most of education services running schools and colleges but education policy was the sole prerogative of the government (Kadzamira & Kunje, 2002).CSOs became active again after the new political dispensation in 1994 (Kadzamira & Kunje, 2002), suggesting that type of regime influences the space available to civil society.

In Africa, the status of civil society organisations as primarily service providers, changed in the year 2000, when they earned themselves a role as partners in policy dialogue during the Forum of African Heads of State on Education for All (EFA) goals held in Dakar, Senegal (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond, & Wolf, 2002). This recognition in Dakar represented a significant paradigm shift; with governments effectively expressing commitment to allow civil society organisations to participate in policy formulation.

In this regard the Malawi national education sector plan (NESP, 2009) expressly stipulated the need for advancing public/private partnership, however, this was primarily to increase access to all sub sectors of education and share costs. Thus, despite the recognition of the important role that CSOs can play in education policy formulation, government however, restricted CSOs largely to their traditional role of delivery of social services and only a few in advocacy work on policy, (Kadzamira & Kunje, 2002). Despite progression in years the position of government has not changed much. Hence NESP (2009) equally does not recognise CSOs as legitimate partners in education policy formulation. Instead it advances their role as implementers of policy. To this effect NESP(2009) stated that CSOs will 'assist in articulating government policy to masses, monitor government performance in provision of primary education services, and support the provision of high quality primary education and act as watch dogs of government expenditure'(p. 8).Furthermore the NESP (2009) does not have formal structures for the roles to be played by CSOs especially as partners in policy formulation but largely entrenches the former, pre-Dakar conference role of CSOs as service providers and implementers of already made education policies.

Although civil society organisations get involved in some way in the policy process, there is however, limited information on how they have appropriated their role as partners in the various aspects of the policy process in Malawi. This study intends to contribute to filling that gap by exploring how civil society actualises 'participation' in major aspects of the policy process now "as partners" which includes policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

1.1 Problem Statement

The 2000 Dakar conference agreed on a shift in the role of CSOs in education sector from service providers to being partners in policy making process. In Malawi, like in many developing countries, policies are mainly politically oriented or indeed donor driven. Participation of CSOs in policy process is important because it is believed to bring to the policy table "voices of the poor". However, for Malawi, it is not clear how CSO actualise their roles at the policy table.

In 2000, a grouping of 23 NGOs established CSCQBE, to be a separate entity from the existing NGO-Government Alliance, as a forum for advancing education for all (EFA) goals (R. James, 2002). The CSCQBE envisaged that through undertaking research and advocacy on specific basic education issues; and by increasing capacity building, learning among members and coordination, it would actualise its main goal of improving quality basic education by 2002. This would be achieved through supporting and influencing the implementation of government and donor policy in Malawi (James, 2002).Available literature on the subject indicates that CSOs in the education sector as partners in the

policy process have been involved in various activities including awareness-raising and lobbying campaigns directed at government, decision-makers, communities and international organisations to bring about changes in the ways in which the education sector is managed, and in policy formulation and implementation(Chimombo, 2007; M. James, 2007; Kadzamira & Kunje, 2002).Further, James (2007) reported that in their quest to influence education policy, CSOs undertook several activities. These activities included participating in policy development teams of donors, partner meetings, national conferences such as one on education, sector reviews, meetings with parliamentary committees, and direct bi-lateral meetings with principal secretaries or ministers.

The possible involvement of CSOs is one way to bring the 'voice of the people' into the policies being formulated (DFID, 2006). However, it is also known that involving CSOs at the policy table does not necessarily mean that CSOs will be able to influence policy nor ensure that their input during policy dialogue will be reflected in the policy formulated (Cherry, 2007). Therefore, although James (2007, p. 24) asserts that " civil society engagement has become a normal and expected part of government *consultation processes* in policy development in Malawi' where 'government actively solicits the views of civil society and *invites* for instance Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE) to be part of key decision making fora as a matter of course", it is not clear if indeed such engagements result into CSOs exerting some influence on the policies being made.

Since 2007 there has been no study known to the researcher to document the role of CSOs, specifically how they are participating in their new role as 'partners' at the '*national* (italics for emphasis) policy table' as set by the Dakar Conference. In addition, it is not yet clear how much leverage CSOs have in influencing education policies, and what their experience has been as they play their role watchdog roles. This study purports to contribute towards filling that gap.

It is therefore important to understand the nature and extent of the influence of civil society organisations in the policy process within the education sector. To understand the participation of CSOs in education policy process the study used Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation. The ladder of participation helped the study understand the types of participation CSOs were engaged in and helped determine whether such involvement was 'meaningful participation'. This study therefore explored how CSOs engage with the policy process in the education sector and fill this gap.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the nature of participation by the civil society during the policy process in the education sector.

1.2.1 Grand Tour Question

The study was guided by the following grand tour question:

How does civil society participate in education policy process (policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) in Malawi?

1.2.1.1 Specific Research Questions

1. How is the civil society represented in the policy structure of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology?
2. How is civil society involved in Education Policy making process?
3. What are the views and perspectives of the CSOs (and other key stakeholders) about CSOs' participation in education policy process?
4. What are the challenges that civil society organisations encounter as they participate in education policy process?

Specifically the objectives of the study were to;

1. Document the existing policy formulation structures of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology
2. Determine how civil society organisations participate in education policy process in Malawi.
3. Document the views and perspectives of the civil society organisations about their participation in education policy process
4. Identify the challenges that CSOs encounter as they participate in education policy process

1.3 Significance of the study

The study assesses if the Dakar agreement of having CSOs as partners in policymaking is being implemented in Malawi. The study contributes to a better understanding of the nature of participation and the factors that enhance the effectiveness of the aid that donors give to states in the context of sector wide approach (SWAP). This work adds to the

increasing body of knowledge on advocacy for policy change by civil society in the education sector (Tomlinson & Macpherson, 2007; Haggerty, 2007; Cherry, 2007; Schnuttgen, and Mollard, 2002; Chimombo, 2007; James, 2002 and Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond and Wolf, 2002). In addition, it contributes to the knowledge and understanding of why, despite high expectations on the participation of civil society in education, the policy process has “not produced policies that reflect the needs of the poor; has not allowed for the CSOs' ‘voice and accountability’ (DFID, 2003 cited in Cherry, 2007); and has "not inspired the CSOs to invest their capacities, resources and commitment into the policy process” (Cherry, 2007, p. 5).

1.4 Limitations of the Study

Due to constraints of time and resources, this study targeted institutions located largely in major towns and cities because they were easy to access, thereby leaving out the voice from the rural population. However, this was taken care of by interaction with the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE) which is a network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the education sector. The CSCQBE also has interactions with district education networks where local NGOs in education sector interact and strategise for education activities at district level.

1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the context to the problem, described the problem, stated overall purpose and specific objectives and, has described the significance and limitations of the study. The next chapter is literature review that will provide details of the key concepts addressed by this study, the conceptual framework used to understand participation and how CSOs participate in education policy process.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Before answering the research questions, the key concepts that constitute the topic of this study need to be defined, using existing literature. Participation, education policy, and the policy process have been the subject of many commentaries, with differing views on how they are defined and applied. This chapter first provides key definitions of these terms that form the basis of the conceptual framework for the study: policy, policy process, and civil society organisation and participation. This is followed by a review of literature concerning CSOs' participation in policy process in the education sector, particularly in Africa and Malawi and includes; CSOs' representation in policy structures, involvement in policy formulation, views and perspectives as well as challenges encountered during the policy process.

2.1 Education Policy Process

Several scholars have defined the term "policy". Some, like (Dye, 2002), define public policy as 'whatever governments choose to do or not to do'. This definition is in agreement with that of (Reimers & McGinn, 1997) who define policy as: "a statement of actions to be preferred in the pursuit of one or more objectives of an organisation". They

further define education policy as “the goals for the education system and the actions that should be taken to achieve them” (Reimers & McGinn, 1997, p.29).

For Malawi, the National Education Sector Plan (NESP, 2007) consists of statements outlining the goals for education and various strategic objectives which education and its providers are envisaged to accomplish, it is therefore the Policy for the education sector. However, the NESP (2007) adds another spin to this understanding of policy. It further outlines various ‘individual policies’ which are intended to guide the actualisation of the envisaged goals and strategies. Such a perception of policy concurs with that given by (Haddad & Demsky, 1995, p.17) who defined policy as “an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous decisions”. In this sense policy ‘provides the authoritative and definitive parameters for major initiatives’ that help ‘managers align their planning and activities securely within government of Malawi intentions’ (NESP, 2007, p. 46). This perspective of policy is important to the study because CSOs were involved in development of both NESP (2007) and the individual policies.

The term 'policy process' refers to "processes of making policy, of decision-making, and ways of putting issues on the agenda as matters of public concern, along with often rather intangible processes of the way issues are thought of and talked about" Keeley (as cited in Führmann, 2006, p. 8). Policy process therefore includes all activities and decisions to do with bringing into being a particular policy and consequently involves gathering

relevant information, analysis and decision-making; implementation of the policy; monitoring and evaluation of the policy and eventual modifications to the policy based on its performance (Karl, as cited inFührmann, 2006). This is summarised by Figure 2.1.

Therefore, education policy process is the process of coming up with the goals for the education system and the actions that should be taken to achieve them that will guide delivery of education.

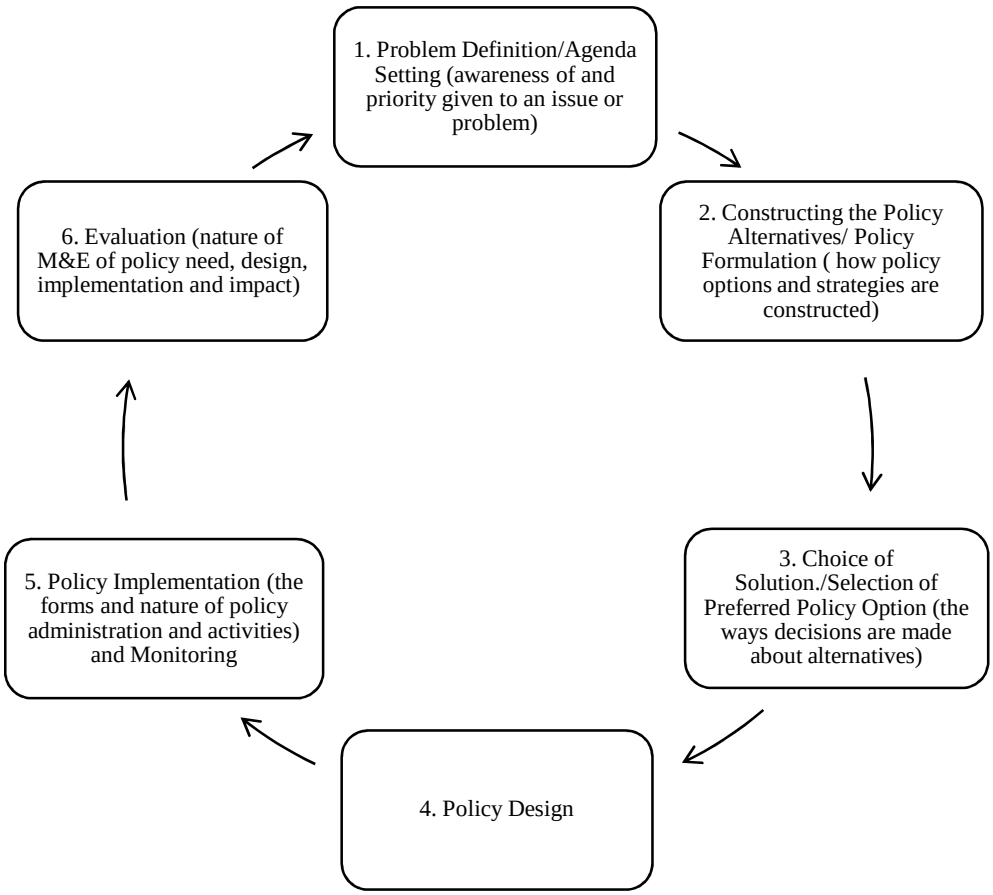

Figure 2.1 Policy Cycle adapted from Young and Quinn, 2002 and Court *et al.*, 2006

2.2 Education Civil Society Organisation

There are various schools of thought on the meaning and role of CSOs. Some scholars consider civil society organisations as people centred institutions whose primary concern is to address the needs and aspirations of the voiceless largely on a voluntary basis. Mundy, Cherry, Haggerty, MaClure, & Sivasubramaniam (2008, p. 2) refer to CSOs as "organized groups or associations that 'are separate from the state, enjoy some autonomy in relations with the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests, values or identities'' (citing Manor, et al.1999, Mercer 2002 and Edwards (2004). According to a report by United Nations Development Programme, UNDP (2001, p. 12) CSOs are "non-state actors whose aims are neither to seek governing power nor to generate profits" rather CSOs "unite people to advance shared goals and interests". This perspective reflects the dominant perception of the meaning and role of education sector civil society in Malawi. As Chapter 4 will show, this perspective reflects the nature and work of the CSCQBE.

Another school of thought views CSOs as a political entity. Howell (as cited inJames2002, p.4) stated that USAID defined CSOs as “non-state organisations that can act as a catalyst for democratic reform” and therefore provide space for people to oppose autocratic states and facilitate peoples participation in development activities. Diamond however warned that such a situation was potentially capable of creating ‘'major tensions in democratic development" hence the "need for limits on autonomy'' (1994, p. 14).Tensions between CSOs and government are inevitable due to the assumed role of CSOs as both watchdog and partner to government. Thus, CSOs have to balance

carefully their roles as they engage with governments as both apolitical as well as political entities. While this view of CSOs may be more relevant for those non-governmental organisation working on civil and political rights, it is equally applicable for CSOs working in the education sector. In fact, most relations between governments and civil society organisations turn sour when the CSOs exercise their role as watchdogs and touch on what is considered by government as ‘sensitive issues with political overtones'.

A particularly useful notion of civil society is that provided by Scholte (2004, p. 214) that ‘'civil society groups bring citizens together non-coercively in deliberate attempts to mould the formal laws and informal norms that regulate social interaction''. In Malawi the education CSOs coalesced into a network called Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE) as a coordinated and united front to champion quality basic education and EFA goals. Mundy et al. (2008, p. 2) restricted the use of ‘education civil society’ to mean only ‘formal civil society actors operating within the national education policy arena: NGOs, parent’s associations, teachers unions, faith-based organizations, private provider groups, and networks or coalitions’. CSOs in this study shall be as described by Mundy et al.(2008) and functioning as described by (Scholte, 2004).CSOs assume this role as they take their seat at the national policy table as representatives of the masses albeit self-appointed. This is so because usually CSOs do not hold their office as a result of the masses electing them into those offices but rather as ‘representatives of the masses’ in an ‘unelected’ capacity at the policy table. The legitimacy of their assumed

position as representatives of the masses is largely derived and seen when their voice truly captures the aspirations and needs of the masses.

Considering that CSOs are taken as partners in the policy making process, their role within the policy process can better be explained by looking at the policy cycle (Figure 2.1).According to (Pollard & Court, 2005)CSOs can participate at each stage of the policy cycle in the policy process in the following ways:

- through meaningfully articulating evidence during agenda setting so that policy makers adopt issues as policy agenda;
- facilitating incorporation of credible, contextualized, adequate and high quality evidence as input into policy documents during formulation of policy alternatives;
- enabling implementation of policy by adapting evidence to a relevant particular policy context and;
- enabling consumers of policy to understand what constitutes as evidence as policy is being implemented hence ultimately facilitate policy monitoring and evaluation.

However, the opportunity to bring such evidence to bear on the policy process is especially facilitated when CSOs are given space to participate within formal political spaces. Scholars on education policy in Malawi have noted that CSOs have an unprecedented opportunity to do so through their inclusion in the national policy process (Chimombo, 2007; R. James, 2002; Miller-Grandvaux et al., 2002).

2.3 The nature and types of participation in the policy process

Literature exists on education policy and the participation of civil society in the policy process. Some of such literature has examined the nature of participation, its types, and roles in the policy process. There is ample work on the meaning of participation from the perspective of development. Gaynor (2008) stated that participation as a concept was borne out of the development discourse, and has in the course of time meant several things to different people. It is consequently 'loaded with ideological, social, political and methodological meanings, giving rise to a wide range of interpretations' (Lawrence, 2006 as cited in Reed, 2008, p.6). For instance Oakley & Marsden (1984) defined participation as "...a voluntary contribution by the people to one or another of the public programs supposed to contribute to national development but the people are not expected to take part in shaping the program or criticizing its content"(as cited in Samah & Alef, 2011, p. 188). In this sense participation is taken as a 'means' towards achieving project objectives which have been decided on by 'power holders' and not the participants themselves. The primary concern for participation here is merely its use as a tool to increase efficiency and effectiveness of projects regardless of whether or not such projects have any utility at all to those participating.

Still other scholars have loosely defined participation as 'taking part in the process of formulation, passage, and implementation of public policies [through] action by citizens which is *aimed at influencing decisions[*emphasis mine*]* which are, in most cases, ultimately taken by public representatives and officials' Parry, et al., 1992(as cited in Litva et al., 2002, p. 1826). Within the context of development, participation of this kind

as an ‘end’ in itself is not ‘passive’ but ‘active’ since people ‘choose, cognitively, affectively, and physically, to engage in establishing, implementing, and evaluating both the overall direction of a programme and its operational details’(Bernard, 1990, p. 7, cited in Shaeffer, 1994). As an end in itself, participation is a long-term process with an inherent object of building capacity of the participants so that they can competently engage in the participation process (Oakley, 1991 as cited in Gregory 2000, p.182).The definition given by the World Bank corroborates the above definition.

The World Bank defines participation as ‘the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services’ (World Bank, 2001, p. 3). Rose, (2003) referred to such participation which results in influencing policy as ‘genuine’ participation. Genuine participation leads to empowerment of those participating to the point where they begin to influence decisions affecting them and the development work in which they are involved. Defining participation in this way is in line with the spirit of Dakar (2000) declaration regarding inclusion of CSOs as partners at the policy table which was to: “Ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development” (Schnuttgen & Mollard, 2002, p.2).

Among authors that categorise or produce typologies on participation, some have advocated for institutionalised participation since participation is a democratic right and not just a normative goal (Richards, Blackstock, & Carter, 2004). The advantage of

institutionalising participation is that it provides freedom to the representatives on the policy table to genuinely desire and negotiate with the decision makers. This is based on the assumption that decision makers will not come to the policy table with non-negotiable positions already taken at higher levels of the organisation prior to the participation process (Reed, 2008). Additionally, it is further argued that institutionalised participation gives decision makers the freedom to implement and provide resources to the outcome of the participatory process even when they have not been tested. Bolivia institutionalised participation in policy making by enactment of the Law of Popular Participation in 1995(Curran, 2005). This law regularised and broadened participation process to local municipal level hence included more CSOs in the national budget process. Additionally, it meant that participation of CSOs could occur at set times with due diligence to all matters and structures and with the full knowledge of all those concerned as was the case for the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) process (Curran, 2005).This implies that absence of such law means participation of CSOs in the policy process may be less regular and restrictive by excluding other sectors of the civil society. In addition, timing and 'information sharing' to do with the process may not be given due attention by those organising the policy process.

Certain literature has focused on institutionalised participation as broad based and inclusive (Eberlei, 2001). According to the World Bank, use of already socially accepted structures that are integrated within the social and political fabric of society ensures sustainability of the participation process (World Bank, 2001) as cited in Eberlei (2001). It also assures quality participation by ensuring that requisite information is available and

given on time. Further, deliberations are carried out in a language common to all actors and are deliberately given adequate time (ODI, 2001, McGee & Norton 2000 as cited in Eberlei (2001).Similarly (McGee &Norton 2000; & Rodenberg 2001) as cited in Eberlei (2001) further stated that another key feature of institutionalised participation is that it is representative, involves known and validated CSOs including those often marginalised such as youth and women to sit at the policy table. Additionally, the process ensures that it is not dominated by the elites.

The questions in this study partly seek to determine if participation of CSOs was institutionalised and if there were formal structures to facilitate its engagement with policy actors in the sector. Since institutionalised participation is inclusive, the study also sought to explore if CSOs' representation at the policy table was inclusive. In order to explore these aspects of participate on, the study used Arnsteins' ladder of participation as its conceptual framework.

2.3.1 Arnsteins' ladder of citizen participation

The review of the literature has further provided this study with its conceptual framework, located within Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein's, 1969). Arnstein's ladder of citizen's participation provides a hierarchical typology of participation, ranging from manipulation, through partnership to citizen control. Figure 2.2shows the various forms participation would take along a 'participation continuum' and their ascribed position on the hierarchical ladder. This is with respect to how each form of participation facilitates achievement of 'influencing decision'. Arnstein suggests

that the ultimate objective of participation is to influence decision-making process. This study subscribes to Arnstein's view that participation in the policy process should be for the purpose of influencing both policy and policy process to the benefit of participants. In this case, the participants are the CSOs as stakeholders in the policy process and their constituencies.

According to Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, each of the eight rungs represents a particular form of involvement on the 'participation continuum' and signifies the power and influence which citizens' involvement have to influence policy or decision-making process. Arnstein's ladder of participation is a good tool to use to ascertain whether or not CSOs are meaningfully participating in education policy process in the sector, in addition to confirming the policy structures in which the CSOs are involved. This simplicity and clarity makes the ladder relevant to contemporary situations (Cornwall, 2008). What makes this ladder even more appropriate for the study is the fact that policy making is constitutionally a prerogative of the executive arm of government (Malawi Government, 2004).

Despite its strength, other scholars have criticised Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation. They argue that the normative nature of the ladder is misleading because other factors matter in as far as whether policy or decision making will be influenced by any form of participation (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002; Cornwall, 2008). Such factors include the purpose and context of participation which they argue can make forms of participation such as information-sharing and

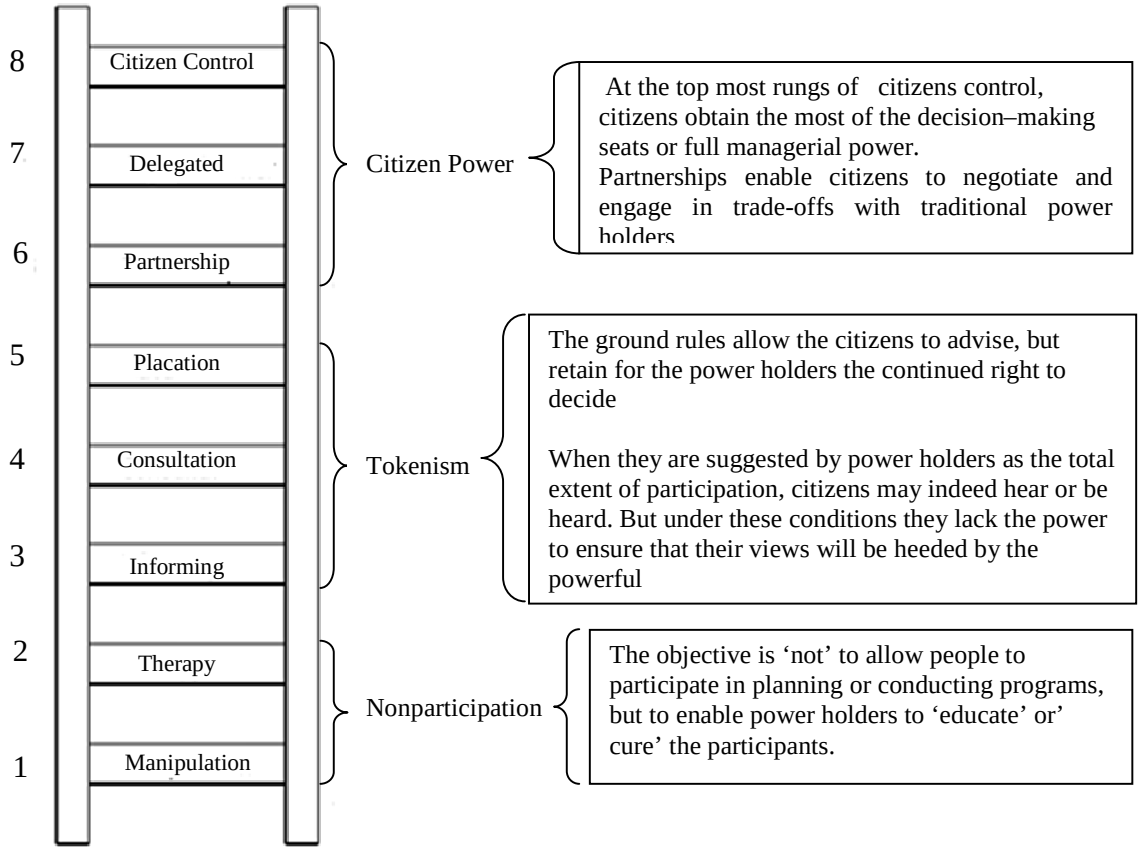

Figure 2.2. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969)

consultation which are lower on her ladder become eminent in the policy process (Brinkerhoff & Cosby, 2002; Cornwall, 2008).

However, while such observations are correct, that decision makers share information and consult, it is also equally true that not everyone who shares information and consults makes decisions. Further, Arnstein's ladder is being criticised for insisting that everyone

who participates wants to be in control and own the decision-making process because other participants simply want their concerns to be addressed by the ensuing policies and not be in control (Cornwall, 2008; Tritter & McCallum, 2006). The point of departure to this criticism is that while such participants may not want to mean exercising operational power, they however want to exercise strategic power since the decisions must satisfy them and what they want. This is effectively being in control hence the ladder suffices as an appropriate tool to use for the study.

Brinkerhoff and Crosby(2002), who asserted that stakeholder participation in the policy process is absolutely essential because of the advantages it confers on the process, have a typology of stakeholder participation that mirrors the Arnstein's ladder of participation and underlines its utility as a tool for analysis. According to them, stakeholder participation can take up several forms which include; information-sharing, consultation, and collaboration, shared decision making and empowerment (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002).

According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) the commonest and most basic level of participation is information-sharing where stakeholders are simply given information by what Arnstein (1969) calls 'power holders'. Since the information given is for a purpose decided upon by the power holders, not only do they control the type of information to share with the stakeholders but also the type of media used to disseminate that information effectively. The second is consultation where stakeholders adequately engage with the information and are allowed to give informed feedback (Brinkerhoff & Crosby,

2002). When coupled with a genuine desire on the part of power holders to utilise the stakeholders' feedback, the resultant decisions or policies developed tend to have considered feedback from stakeholders. Stakeholders are now truly given an opportunity to influence decision or policy because they are not merely used for legitimisation purposes, to 'rubber stamp' decisions made by power holders. However, the short side of consultation is that generally, stakeholders do not have the power to ensure that their views are adopted in the ensuing decision or policy.

This study sought to understand the nature of consultation and its effect on the policy process in Malawi, in particular if it leads to influencing policy in the sector because literature presents contradictory views. Schnuttgen and Khan (2004) reported that being involved in consultations merely meant commenting on the flow of a draft and contributing ideas on a technical issue often hardly influencing policy. On the other hand Cherry (2007) reported mixed sentiments among CSOs. While some CSOs in her study felt consultation with government had succeeded to influence education policy other CSOs in the same study felt very strongly that consultations had not influenced education policy because their input was not reflected in any policy made in the sector. In addition, Cheru (2006) stated that consultations have the advantage that government is not obliged to incorporate received input into policy it intends to make. In addition, Cheru reports that governments have tended to restrict their engagement with CSOs to the level of consultation only and not moved on to making decisions jointly with CSOs policy actors. Furthermore, according to Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, consultation is lower level form of participation and considered non effectual in influencing policy.

However despite such pessimism on the efficacy of consultations between CSOs and governments to influence policy change in education sector, experience elsewhere has proved its effectiveness. Haggerty (2007) reported that TEN/MET influenced national education policy through consultation with government. Its success was a result of providing in many for a such as joint evaluation missions and PEDP consultations a credible, independent and alternative voice to that of government. Further, TEN/MET performance not only contradicts Schnuttgen and Khan (2004) but also reflects a positive advancement in the capacity of CSOs to influence policy in education sector.

The third form of participation is called collaboration (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002). This is usually utilised where the power holders or organisers of 'participation' have a capacity and knowledge gap which the stakeholders can supply in order for them to achieve their policy goal (Gray, 1989). The fourth type of participation is called shared decision-making or joint decision-making. Here stakeholders and the power holders treat each other as equals and jointly bear the responsibility for policy or decision taken. Such decisions can be mediated through temporary structures such as task forces or permanent structures such as partnerships. Other structures include workshops, discussions forums where the objective would be to develop a sense of ownership. Both stakeholders and organisers own the decision.

Finally Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) identify empowerment as a fifth form of participation. In this form of participation, stakeholders are no longer passive recipients of information or decisions made by power holders but rather they can independently

originate and pursue decisions and actions to fulfil their own objectives. In empowerment, stakeholders are provided requisite space and capacity building opportunities to effect their aspirations as an independent development agency empowered with delegated authority. This entails a more equitable sharing of power and a higher level of political awareness and strength for disadvantaged groups. Empowerment includes strengthening the legal and financial status of stakeholder organizations, and supporting initiatives conceived independently by stakeholders. Empowered stakeholders are those that have both technical competencies (knowledge) to effectively engage in the policy dialogue at the policy table and also the power to really influence decision-making (Reed,2008). Since participants to policy dialogue may have different knowledge and perspectives, an empowering participation process ensures that it is iterative and two-way learning occurs between participants, stakeholders and researchers (Reed, 2008).

Stakeholder participation confers both advantages and disadvantages on policy and the policy process itself. It is advantageous because a) it helps to reduce animosity and mistrust among policy actors by promoting social learning, where individuals engaged in the process begin to learn from each other, appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each other and importantly appreciate the trustworthiness and legitimacy of each other's views (Blackstock, Kelly, & Horsey, 2007), b) improves the quality of policy based on personal experiences and insight of stakeholders which help to frame the problem better, adds valuable local knowledge to the system analysis, and increases the focus on prevention of adverse consequences (Refsgaard, Van der Sluijs, Højberger,

&Vanrolleghem, 2007). Additionally, participation leads to successful policy implementation and sustainability resulting from improved quality of policy that captures the needs and aspirations of the grassroots, voiceless and marginalised Brinkerhoff &Crosby, 2002 and AGCSE 2007a, 2007b, cited in Mundy et al. (2008).This is possible where participation by stakeholders is meaningfully integrated in structures within the political environment of a given country and if it has empowered and legitimatised stakeholders. Thus, Eberlei (2007) asserted that stakeholder participation is only meaningful if it is ‘rights-based'.

On the other hand, Irvin & Stansbury (2004) highlighted disadvantages of involving citizens in government decision making. For instance, citizens may find it time consuming and sometimes not interesting, pointless if decisions taken are ignored especially where the for a is dominated by the powerful elite. Equally government may find that citizen participation is also time consuming, costly and carries the risk of citizens becoming more hostile to government. On the other hand, Hoppers (2009) is of the view that widespread participation of stakeholders in the policy process and the strength of their field experience does not necessarily ensure democratic outcomes.

The critical disadvantage is that where knowledge and power are lacking on the part of stakeholders, such stakeholder participation gets reduced to what Arnstein (1969) describes as non-participation since it becomes one-way flow of information-sharing from decision makers to stakeholders (Reed, 2008). The guidelines for institutionalisation of policy structures in SWAp include a provision for empowerment of

stakeholders involved in the SWAps: 'which include an element of capacity building for effective ownership and leadership aimed at safeguarding the sustainability of all sector programmes' (Government of Malawi, 2008). Since CSOs are recognised formally as stakeholders in the SWAp, it is envisaged that they would be empowered as they engage with government in the policy process. The study therefore explored if CSOs underwent any capacity building to empower them.

2.4 Civil society representation in education policy structures

The literature contributes to answering the first question of the study, about the nature of civil society participation in education policy structures. The forum of African heads of state on Education for All (EFA) goals recognised the critical role that NGOs can play in promoting universal and equitable quality education and equally accepted and welcomed the NGOs' new role as alternative education providers, innovators, advocates and policy dialogue partners, (Miller-Grandvaux, et al., 2002). Consequently education sector plans of many African states 'routinely recognise an important role for civil society in the realisation of national basic educational goals' (Mundy et al., 2008, p. 1 citing Kruse, 2003; Lexow, 2003; Ratcliffe & Macrae, 1999). CSOs are therefore being included as partners in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national educational plans and policies (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; Mundy et al., 2008). However, for many CSOs nonetheless, accessing the policy table remains problematic (Chowdhury, Chelsie, & Ingie, 2006) only reluctantly accepting them as partners due to pressure from donors including the World Bank, IMF and Bilateral development partners (Tomlinson & Macpherson, 2007)as conditionality for Aid. Thus education sectors engage CSOs in the

policy process in different ways (Mundy et al., 2008; Cherry, 2007; Haggerty, 2007), always attempting to keep the CSOs at an arm's length from the national policy table.

CSOs are either situated in policy structures at national level, decentralised regional, district and school levels. Mundy et al.(2008) reported that in Tanzania, government had expressly given the CSOs a policy seat at national level. According to Haggerty (2007) CSOs in Tanzania, were given seats on both the Basic Education Development Committee (BEDC) as well as its five Technical Working Groups. Through the BEDC, CSOs engage with the policy process at national level in issues of teacher education, non-formal education, and secondary to pre-primary education. However, CSOs were not represented in Management structures of Ministry of Education. Hence CSOs in Tanzania are not members of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (IMSC) which is the highest level of government responsible for Management of Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) (Haggerty, 2007).

Similarly, CSOs in Burkina Faso have a seat on the policy table (Mundy et al., 2008) but, unlike in Tanzania, much of their activity is localised at decentralised regional level structures. Their localisation of activity at decentralised policy structures was provided for in the Education Plan. Interestingly, despite their strong presence in the education sector, CSOs were largely excluded from participating in the development of the Education Plan. Again the pattern is clear, government was keeping the CSOs away from spaces where their influence would be felt nationally.

CSOs in Mali were only allowed to operate at the lowest decentralised structure, the school management committees (Cherry, 2007). Locating CSOs to school level is due to the fact that according to the Education Plan for Mali (referred to as the PRODEC), it is the sole prerogative of government to define national policy, support, supervise and coordinate policy implementation and evaluate the education system (Cherry, 2007). While locating CSOs far away from national policy structures restricts their influence largely to their immediate locales, their uncertainty about what constitutes policy making structures undermined their influence further. Cherry (2007, p. 131) found out very suggestively that CSOs in Mali 'do not know or agree upon which are the key decision-making spaces and they do not collectively aspire to access those spaces'. Consequently, their ability to effectively exploit and influence policy dialogue opportunities that avail to them is undermined. Unlike the examples listed above, the situation in Kenya is rather different (Mundy et al., 2008). Here, CSOs do not formally have seats on national, regional or school level structures. Instead they continue to engage in policy dialogue with government and donors informally. They do so through annual Education Stakeholders Forum, National Advisory Council (to advise minister of education on a needs-based basis) and Kenya Education Sector Plan Steering Committee.

However, accessing the policy table by CSOs in Africa, at whatever level, has not been without its problems. Although CSOs are represented at policy table, Mundy et al.(2008) reported that CSOs are not informed of rules governing their selection to the policy structures and that governments still have the ultimate say over who gets invited to the policy table, and for which purposes. Further, most CSOs have been involved in

education policy process as invited participants to consultative forums on an ad hoc basis (Miller-Grandvaux, et al., 2002).While such ad hoc involvement avails CSOs opportunity to interface with government, the mechanism though functional is however ephemeral in nature. (Razon, 2003) contends that the mechanisms for CSO-government interface should not only be functional but also durable hence the need for institutionalised policy structures. He said that until this is done, the interim, one-off nature of CSO-government engagements will continue to limit the possibilities for effective and meaningful collaboration on Education for all (EFA). According to Razon (2003) the 'formulation of clear, well understood, and accepted criteria regarding who can and should participate in the policy process is essential if the latter is to build broad support and legitimacy'. On the other hand, lack of formal structures for engagement with government has been cited as one factor that has led to ineffective and less meaningful interface between CSOs and government in sub Saharan Africa (Schnuttgen & Khan, 2004**).**

The introduction of SWAp structures seems to have addressed this concern because now CSOs have formal structures which they can utilise to interface with government. Probably what is urgent is how these structures are utilised. Haggerty (2007, p. 94) summarises the desire of most CSOs in Africa with the statement that "although governments should be ' in the driver's seat' (citing Buchert), policy structures should be opened to include civil society voices at the education policy table". It is in this context as passive participants that CSOs in Malawi have largely participated in the policy process: as service providers translating policy into practice through implementing projects or running institutions of learning. Chimombo (2007) observed that civil society

organisations in the education sector have traditionally been known to complement government efforts as implementers of education policy through the various projects which they implemented in the sector. MoEST did not expect CSOs to change let alone make education policy, but only helping ministry in the delivery of the ministry's services to the people at grassroots level. Rose (2003) identified such kind of participations as 'passive' participation. She asserted that such participation may not necessarily be voluntary as it may occur due to some inducement be it coercion or manipulation.

The picture that emerges from the review of the literature on Africa is threefold. Firstly, governments while accepting CSOs as partners at the policy table, the apparent lack of placement of CSOs at national policy structures remains problematic. Secondly, although CSOs have been allowed a seat at national policy structure, they are nonetheless kept out of the 'real echelons of power' by government. Thirdly, despite being kept away from national policy structures, education CSOs are enjoying an increased policy space created by their use of very good evidence-based advocacy work, through advocacy and research, use of media and engaging international networks and actors to exert pressure on government to allow some policy changes(Mundy et al., 2008).

In Malawi, like in other African countries, CSOs have been involvement in education policy process (James, 2002; Chimombo, 2007). However, no academic study has been undertaken to document policy structures utilised for CSOs-government interface. Further, although involvement of CSOs in policy dialogue is now said to be routinised,

the rules and procedures governing the process of access by CSOs to such policy structures has not been documented.

2.5 Involvement of CSOs in Education Policy making process

This study's second question is about the involvement of CSOs in the education policy process. To accomplish their role as partners, CSOs need not only be represented at policy table or policy structures, but rather their actual participation at policy table should be accompanied by some degree of influence in the policy making process. However, with respect to Malawi 'government support for CSOs' involvement in policy process especially policy formulation, appears to be that of "reluctant acquiescence" and where it is occurring, it is more a result of donor pressure than government commitment' James (2002, p. 16). Consequently in terms of capacity to influence education policy, the experience for CSOs in many countries is that they have only been able to really influence education policy whenever the suggested changes did not depart drastically from the established foundations of existing education systems (Schnuttgen & Khan, 2004).

The literature further presents a more nuanced picture with respect to CSOs influencing policy in the education sector. While some scholars have presented a pessimistic picture, others have been rather optimistic about the capacity of CSOs to influence policy. Schnuttgen and Khan (2004) reported that CSO networks with requisite competencies for policy dialogue with the state in the education sector, very rarely have taken part in the agenda-setting or final drafting stages and almost not in monitoring and evaluating policy

implementation. Their participation in the policy process was restricted to that of being 'contributors' on a technical issue during consultations and merely that of critiquing 'flow of ideas' on a draft.

However, the findings of Haggerty (2007) and Mundy et al.(2008) reveal a marked improvement over what was reported by Schnuttgen and Khan (2004). CSOs influence education policy at national level in Tanzania under TEN/MET. In sharp contrast to the experience of CSOs reported by Schnuttgen and Khan (2004) TEN/MET literally co-authored the national education plan. Thus, TEN/MET were not only given a seat at the policy table but they also participated in drafting education policy document and consequently ensured that it had captured the CSOs' role of policy, research and the contentious accountability roles into the national education plan (Mundy et al., 2008). As a result, it was able directly to influence not only the type of wording but also the content of what went into the policy. Thus, it ensured that it included in the sector plan what it considered as key roles to be played by the CSOs and these included the advocacy role, CSOs' role in policy, research and the contentious accountability roles (Mundy et al.,2008). These results of TEN/MET are a stark rebuttable to the stance adopted by Razon (2003) that CSOs cannot make 'joint-decisions' with an elected government. Perhaps this is just an isolated case where the CSO has had that opportunity to experience equal partnership at the policy table.

In their study, Mundy et al.(2008) found that the experience of CSOs in Mali and Burkina Faso was rather different from that of Tanzania. The difference was that the governments

of Mali and Burkina Faso allowed CSOs to influence education policy at the level of decentralised structures. However, for Mali their impact at that level was not significant due to the confusion among the stakeholders about their appropriate role. Additionally, CSOs in Mali appeared not to have embraced their contentious role of watchdogs to hold the government accountable to its electorate (Mundy et al., 2008). For Burkina Faso, government allowed CSOs to exercise more leverage in influencing education policy at the level of decentralised structures where CSOs were even allowed to manage certain parts of the sector programmes. CSOs were known to be enjoying very good relations with government although even here government controlled the rules of engagement (Mundy et al., 2008). In stark contrast to the CSOs' experience in Tanzania, Mali and Burkina Faso the experience of CSOs in Kenya was that the government preferred that they continue to work in their traditional role as service providers more than in their new role as policy partners (Mundy et al., 2008).

Why did TEN/MET exert such unique influence at the policy table? Haggerty (2007) determined that Tanzania education network (TEN/MET) used two key strategies that emerged critical in terms of facilitating huge degree of influence on education policy in the sector. One strategy was relational and the other was operational. The relational strategy involved relationships between policy actors which were government, development partners and CSOs. The operational strategy involved the use of advocacy or research. Specifically, these strategies included: ''building trust among CSOs; working directly with government; combining research and advocacy initiatives; engaging media;

collaborating and exchanging information with other networks and non-education CSOs in Tanzania and linking to international movements'' (Haggerty, 2007, p. 56).

Building trust among the diverse CSOs was essential for purposes of building a common voice for TEN/MET and even more critical if they were to exert any plausible influence at all. To this effect, TEN/MET chose educated, credible and committed key individuals among CSOs with requisite technical and social qualities to work directly with government. Kingdon (1995) referred to such people as 'policy champions' and says such people are critical to the success of policies. TEN/MET found this strategy to be very useful in leveraging influence with government. This was corroborated by Hyden (1999) and Kelsall (2002) cited in Haggerty (2007) who said that in the South, "informal politics are suggested to play a much stronger role than in Northern countries" (p.57). Building trust among policy actors is an essential ingredient in the policy process because it reduces mistrust and resultant tensions that often characterise relations between government and CSOs policy actors.

Apart from use of 'policy champions' Haggerty (2007) found out that the use of media in advocacy also proved a useful leveraging tool. TEN/MET's experience was that governments apparently listened when credible evidence-based issues came into the public domain through media in a convincing manner. However, this experience was not common among CSOs. Despite the call for use of research and evidenced-based information when developing policy, experience on the ground has proved otherwise.

Two factors have negatively affected this call for research based evidence: first credible evidence being ignored by government policy actors and therefore not used to inform policy formation and second CSOs lacking technical expertise to carryout credible research. This study intended to determine if policy dialogue at the policy seat by the CSOs in Malawi is informed and guided by research-based evidence.

Haggerty (2007) found that the strategy of networking with non-education CSOs proved useful in leveraging influence on government. TEN/MET found such strategy effective in influencing government to change its position from that of rejection to acceptance of the right to education of pregnant school girls. This strategy was important not only because it increased the CSOs' 'strength in numbers' but also in enhancing 'representativeness' of CSOs' voice when negotiating with government. TEN/MET found the strategy very useful when government refused to deal with it and the non-education CSOs took up the same issue with government instead and managed to successfully conclude the matter just like TEN/MET had desired it to be. While this strategy uses CSOs which are within the country, TEN/MET would also appeal to networks that are outside the country with the use of ICT to help resolve an internal issue. This strategy called 'boomerang' was employed by TEN/MET and proved effective in influencing government to change its policy position and accept abolishing user fees. There are several other CSOs networks in the country. It is however not clear if CSCQBE works in liaison with them in its quest to influence education policy in the country.

Participation in policy dialogue by CSOs has also been met with some institutional constraints. Gaynor (2008) while referring to the capacity of CSOs involvement in developing economic policies, said that generally, the technocratic solution-driven discourse has continued to be a constraint and effectively denied participation by the wider range of actors. Similarly that 'argumentation backed by evidence–based research' (p.229) prevents many actors from participating in the discourse because this requires 'articulateness' and resources not common among many actors. Although that observation by Gaynor (2008) was made about the CSOs involved in the development of economic policies, the PRSPs, these issues are likely to be true for CSOs participation in education policy process since PRSPs included education policies. Mundy et al.(2006) reported that for Mozambique lack of capacity and cohesiveness among the CSOs limited participation of CSOs in education sector to consultancy, a little bit of advocacy and monitoring and evaluation roles. The perceived shortfalls in capacity on the part of CSOs as cited by Gaynor (2008) only helped to justify the perception among government policy actors in their rejection of CSOs as equal partners at the policy table.

With regard to involvement in monitoring and evaluation, Haggerty (2007) stated that there is evidence that civil society have gone into monitoring and evaluating implementation of government policy including budget on education sector. Utilisation of learning from monitoring and evaluation among policy actors to inform policy process has however been problematic. Riddell (1999b) cited in Kitamura(2009) however, stated that despite this development, information and knowledge emanating from monitoring and evaluation of implemented policies are rarely used in the policy formulation process.

Mussa (2009) corroborated this finding when she reported that Malawi does not use inspection reports to inform policy. Since the role of research-based evidence is essential to policy making, the study sought to find out how CSCQBE uses research-based evidence as it participates at the policy table. The experience of TEN/MET provides a glimmer of hope that research-based evidence would inform policy formulation more in the education sector.

Another constraint experienced by CSOs in the policy process was the tendency by governments to withhold key information on policy and deny access to it by CSOs or delaying to give it to stakeholders. This practice is known to be a strategy used by government officials to frustrate CSOs' work in policy process (Haggerty, 2007). It is not clear whether CSOs in Malawi experience such a situation thereby jeopardising their effective participation at the policy table. Thus, understanding how civil society organisations in Malawi deal with such constraints would be a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge of participation of civil society in policy process.

In view of the many constraints faced by CSOs, Kornsweig et al.(2006) cited in Court, Mendizababal, Osborne, & Young, (2006) reported that there are several ways in which CSOs can influence policy and the top 5 were networking among organisations, providing training, commenting on draft policy documents, organising policy seminars, publications on policy issues and providing services. The success of TEN/MET in influencing policy in Tanzania education sector appears was probably because it met these conditions. Additionally, by drawing largely on the work of its member HakiElimu,

TEN/MET effectively used learning from research in its advocacy work both locally and outside Tanzania (Haggerty, 2007).

What is emerging from the literature reviewed herein is that civil society can influence policy at national level but of pivotal importance in this regard is establishment of good working relations with government. Further, CSOs must develop requisite technical skills like doing credible research, evidence based advocacy, and policy analysis. CSOs have not embraced monitoring and evaluation of policy in the sector as one of their constituent cardinal roles in the sector. Other factors mitigating their influence at national level include inadequate finances and limited collaboration among themselves. Consequently, they continue to largely be allowed minimal influence with spaces away from the national arena while still being accepted as service providers.

2.5.1 Participation of CSOs in education policy process in Malawi

Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE) which was formed in 2000has been involved in the policy process in various ways. According to James (2002) and James (2007) CSCQBE has been involved in the production of key policy documents such as NESP. However, the input of CSCQBE into these documents is not clear in terms of level and form of participation. James (2002) said that “it is also clear that foreigners often bring high quality analysis and writing skills- in fact almost all the three coalitions’ public statements, newsletters, and press releases have been written by foreigners" (p. 21) with the consequent negative effects of government perceiving the coalitions as foreign driven. What makes this position intriguing is what James noted that Malawi government

at the time would prefer CSOs to work on policy by "simplifying, translating and disseminating policy" James, (2002, p. 16) and not being intimately involved in policy formulation process. But this stance of government as portrayed by James is contrary to the spirit of the Dakar (2000) declaration. It is noteworthy that this position of government in 2002 with regard to the role of CSOs in the education sector is the same as one indicated by the national Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP, 2009-2013). Again signifying, the government's wish to keep CSOs in their service provision role and not as co-developers of policy in the sector.

When it comes to the focus of CSOs' activity in the policy process, there seems to have been a shift. James (2002, p. 8) says that from the start, "CSCQBE was involved in activities such as research, advocacy, community sensitisation, conducting research on 'Community sensitisation and Mobilisation' by CERT and Malawi Schools Parents Association (MASPA), representation on key national and international forums, outreach through meetings with key stakeholders; production and distribution of briefing papers; and press releases, and development of CSOs coalition membership". On the other hand, according to Chimombo (2007) education CSOs in Malawi are involved in a number of activities. Starting with the most prevalent, these activities include 'HIV/AIDS activities, provision of life skills education, activities to deal with issues of access and retention, advocacy, the provision of early childhood development, activities to achieve universal primary education, gender and equity and teacher education as well as adult literacy'. Looking at the two lists of activities by the CSOs in education between 2002 and 2007, there is a marked departure in terms of their focus. While in 2002 they focused more on

advocacy and policy issues it appears that the focus shifted over the years to less policy related issues. By 2007 CSOs' activities leaned more towards their traditional role as service providers than actors in policy formulation.

2.6 Views and perspectives of the civil society organisations about their participation in education policy process

The literature suggests that policy actors which include, CSO, government and donors, do not necessarily have the same views and perceptions about each other's role and about the policy process. In a study by Commonwealth Education Fund, (Tomlinson & Macpherson, 2007)which covered 16 commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia(Bangladesh, Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia), the CSOs perceive their role in education sector as threefold: 1.)less of service providers except in specialised areas and in sections of society inaccessible to government, 2.)more of a watchdog to government through monitoring of government expenditure of funds in the education sector, to ensure that money allocated to education was indeed spent on education as per relevant needs, and also to lobby for increased funding to the sector, and 3.)as a partner in the policy process 'it is the job of civil society to ask difficult questions of the government, to disagree with policy' Tomlinson and Macpherson, (2007 p.16) but informed by evidence –based research in a manner that assures positive impact on education. Further, CSOs being juxtaposed between grassroots and government, they were in a better position to sensitise communities and governments on EFA goals, and also work with government on planning requisite policies in the

sector. However, use of a complementary approach to government was a must if they were to yield any impact. Unfortunately, the report indicates that this perception is not shared by government which largely sees and welcomes CSOs in the sector as service providers, providing the services which government due to lack of resources cannot provide.

In a study on the quality of civil society participation in national education sector policy processes in Mali, Cherry (2007) found that CSOs had different views and perspectives about their involvement in policy process. Although CSOs were engaged in the development of the education sector plan (PRODEC), one set of CSOs felt that they had participated in the policy process while another set felt that they had not participated at all. The group that felt they had participated in the policy process reported that government had engaged them in a number of activities including consultations at national, regional and local levels; field level-assessments; consultations in a thematic group; in direct one-on-one discussions with PRODEC architects and even that of the design team itself. Further it felt it had participated because its input during the design process was reflected in the PRODEC. On the other hand, CSOs that felt let down by the policy process of participation reported that their quality of participation in the policy process was inferior primarily because the 'quality of the process itself undermined their effective participation, and their contributions were not reflected in the final policy choices' (Cherry, 2007, pp. 96-7). This group attributed their ineffectiveness at policy table to late receipt of invitations and of essential government documents, which did not allow them adequate preparation for policy dialogue and discussions. In addition, they

felt that they were accorded very few seats at the policy table and government denied them other opportunities to engage with it on a one to one basis.

According to Cherry (2007) the intriguing and critical difference between these two groups of CSOs was that the one that felt had participated in the process was inherently in agreement with the policy position of government and that of donors and saw their input reflected in government policy choices. On the other hand, the set that felt had not adequately participated was opposed to the policy positions of government and that of donors, and experienced that their policy positions were not accepted and not reflected in policy choices in PRODEC.

From the above findings, it can be inferred that there was no common understanding among the CSOs on what activities or tasks constituted 'participation' let alone 'quality participation'. In addition, the essence of participation is intricately tied to whether or not your input into the policy process has been adopted. This view concurs with Arnstein (1969) and World Bank (2001) definition of participation "as ability to influence policy''. This congruence seems to vindicate the CSO which felt that they had not participated in the Malian education policy process. These findings reported by Cherry (2007) seem to suggest that government appears to have been reluctant to involve CSOs that were opposed to its policy position. So it interfered with the policy process by sending invitations to policy table dialogue and relevant government documents to CSOs opposed to them *'late'* (italics for emphasis) so that their participation was thus relegated to merely that of legitimisation. In contrast, Government like the first set of CSOs felt very

strongly that CSOs had participated in the design of the education plan because various CSOs took part in many different specific tasks including: “analysis of field level findings through workshops, reporting on the findings from consultations across the country, development of policy options and strategies in thematic working groups, and discussions on policy directions and proposals for participation in PRODEC’s implementation” Cherry (2007, pp. 92-3). This study therefore sought to find out if such dichotomy in perception exists among CSOs which sit at the policy table and furthermore if government uses such approach to sideline CSOs it perceives as opposed to it.

With respect to funding for the sector, CSOs in Mali expressed serious concerns over the new approach that donors had adopted of funding the sector through budget support and not through funding projects within the sector. The CSOs felt government would not be transparent and by becoming subcontractors to government, they run the risk of becoming bankrupt. This would only aggravate their capacity challenges in research, data and policy analysis and role as service providers. They also wished that donors were more transparent regarding the process and how the resources were used. Regarding participation in implementation of the PRODEC, CSOs felt that they did not exert as much influence on how the PRODEC was being actualised during its implementation in addressing their needs and interests unlike the case during its formulation. Cherry(2007) ascribes this situation to the fact that although the spaces for their participation were available, CSOs did not know where key decisions were really being made and how real power was being exercised hence could not appropriate the process. Thus government being in charge, exercised ‘compensatory legitimation’ Weiler, 1990 cited in Cherry

(2007) thus controlled where and how the CSOs participated so that government was seen to both allow the CSOs' voice but at the same time ensure that CSOs do not disrupt its policy agenda and put it in bad light to its strategic partners; the donors.

On the other hand, experience of CSOs in Tanzania showed both their success and challenges. In a study on strategies and successes in influencing education policy change: a case study of the Tanzanian education network (TEN/MET), Haggerty (2007) reports that CSOs viewed their strategies as critical to influencing education policy in Tanzania. Haggerty (2007) stated that the common experience for most CSOs was that they tended to be more complementary and less confrontational and contentious to government. This resulted in good relations with government, and CSOs felt this enabled government to provide them space to participate in policy structures such as BEDC and its Technical Working Groups. CSOs deemed their placement at these structures very strategic because it gave them more access and clout to directly advocate with and lobby government policy actors and development partners for changes.

Gaynor (2008) found similar results in his study on involvement of CSOs in the PRSP process that CSOs tended to avoid confrontational stances to government for fear of being dropped from further engagements. In addition, CSOs in Tanzania felt that the strategy allowed them to actually write parts of the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP)'. Besides, TEN/MET secretariat was allowed to co-write other documents such as the Education Sector Review Aide Memoire, and the Ten Year Education Plan. Furthermore, through use of research and advocacy, other successes included influencing

the adoption of pregnancy and the right to education which supports the re-entry of pregnant girls to schools; the adoption of capitation grant of $10 per child; improved living and working conditions of teachers and the abolition of user fees. It was reported that government did not want to abolish user fees but the decisive moment towards abolition of user fees occurred when the development partners accepted to provide funds to facilitate its execution. This is indicative of how donors use provision of resources for implementation of proposed policies to leverage a lot of influence in the sector. On the other hand, the abolition of user fees reveals the ineffectuality of CSOs to leverage policy change in the sector if government is opposed to the policy being advocated for by CSOs. Further, it brings to question the relevance of research in informing and influencing policy in the face of strong opposition from government who have other concerns to consider. In this case, government was wary of loss of revenue once the policy was adopted. This study sought to explore how the quest of CSOs for policy change was affected by donors due to resource constraint by government.

TEN/MET generally enjoyed good relations with government despite the fact that animosity and mistrust between CSOs and government also characterised CSOs' experience in the policy process in Tanzania. This became pronounced particularly on two occasions. According to Haggerty (2007), this was especially true when CSOs exploited their role as a watchdog. CSOs felt that playing watchdog's contentious role makes CSOs risk facing the wrath of government such as losing your seat at the policy table. For HakiElimu, this occurred when it published in the media its analysis using government's own documents on how the government had failed to attain its own targets

as laid out in the PEDP. Government therefore ‘felt that HakiElimu had acted in bad faith – as it had been “invited” to the policy discussions and had used insider information to discredit the government’ (Haggerty, 2007, p. 80). In reaction to this publication government ‘placed an interdiction that prevented HakiElimu from “undertaking and publishing studies on Tanzanian schools” (Hakielimu, 2005-2007). The government prevented HakiElimu publications from being distributed to schools, withheld statistical data and information, and stopped media from broadcasting HakiElimu’s adverts on PEDP and SEDP’ (Haggerty, 2007, p. 80). Since the main thrust of activities for HakiElimu was research and advocacy, it can be seen from these steps taken by government that its intention was to seriously curtail its role in the sector. Government went further and ‘stopped HakiElimu from representing TEN/MET in the BEDC Technical Working Group (although TEN/MET had elected HakiElimu for this position) and tried to prevent the CSO from attending the Education Sector Review’ (Haggerty, 2007, p. 81)quoting HakiElimu, 2007.

Expressing its dissatisfaction at government’s rejection of HakiElimu, as TEN/MET’s chosen representative at the Education Sector Review, TEN/MET representing 96 CSOs asserted that: ‘We hold to the principle that civil society should be able to choose its own representatives’ and insisting that it felt that ‘CSOs should be able to choose independently who could best represent their interests’ Haggerty (2007, p. 84.) quoting TEN/MET (2006).This experience reveals both the vulnerability of CSOs in the face of hostility from government where government can at will do away with any CSOs it deems working against its interest. However, at the same time TEN/METS role of

standing by HakiElimu highlights the importance of solidarity among CSOs in the face of hostility from government directed against a member of the CSOs. Since tension and animosity characterises government and CSOs relations, it is not known if Malawian CSOs in the sector experience the same hence the study.

CSOs felt that donors exerted a lot of influence in the sector. This was shown by the eventual relenting by government which saw HakiElimu and TEN/MET attending subsequent national sector review. This followed donors' expressed dissatisfaction that TEN/MET decided to boycott the sector review meetings in solidarity with HakiElimu. Donors considered TEN/MET 'role and input into the process essential for legitimizing the event. Haggerty (2007) reported that informants in her study and as suggested by Mercer, 2002 in Mundy et al. (2008)were of the view that Tanzania listened more to donors than the internal policy actors.

Similarly some CSOs in Mali were of the view that donors exerted a large influence in the education sector and that donors had actually imposed their education sector Plan (PRODEC) on Mali. In their view the PRODEC was simply a replica of ten year education plans existing in other African countries such as Burkina Faso, Senegal and Niger. This was due to the degree of consistency in the sector strategies from one country to another such as 'decentralisation, reducing the central government role in education, introducing double-shifting and multi-grade classrooms and giving priority to in-service over pre-service teacher education' (Samoff, 1999 cited in Cherry, 2007, p. 104). Such consistency in strategies across countries lends a lot of credence to the view that the ten

year education plans mentioned are heavily donor influenced and are less of home grown policies (Samoff, 1999 as cited in Cherry, 2007).Donors exert such influence through various ways and for Mali, the World Bank for instance influenced education policy development through provision or withholding of resources alongside provision of advice (Cherry, 2007).

CSOs in Tanzania were also of the view that government responded better when nudging from them was accompanied by media or pressure emanating from the public. Thus Haggerty (2007) reported that TEN/MET's use of the media or external bodies especially donor communities to exert pressure on government proved useful. According to Cherry (2007) INGOs in Mali felt that the education system was not benefiting from experiences of local NGOs at grassroots because they do not have a strong presence at national level where government decision making processes occur. Could CSCQBE be using similar strategies to get government adopt its policy positions?

2.7 Challenges civil society organisations encounter as they participate in education policy process

Being partners with government at the policy table has brought with it a number of challenges for CSOs. Literature establishes that the policy table has some inbuilt institutional limitations that tend to constrain the performance of CSOs. First, while comparing participation of CSOs in PRSPs between Ireland and Malawi, Gaynor (2008) asserted two key institutional constraints to participation. One was that CSOs did not have equal access to policy table with some CSOs being preferred to others. This

experience was also reported by Lister and Nyamugasira (2003) where CSOs who were known to be disadvantaged by proposed policies or those who were opposed to them were not invited to the policy formulation process. This constraint was further compounded by the ambiguity regarding the rules and procedures inside the policy process often leaving CSOs ignorant of the same.

The second challenge is that government is not listening to CSOs especially the local grassroots without connections with international NGOs (INGOs) or development partners. The experiences of civil societies in Mali (Cherry & Mundy, 2007) and Kenya (Sivasubramaniam & Mundy, 2007)have shown that being granted a seat at the policy table and participating in the meetings is not the same as having an impact on education policy. Thus, Evans and Ngalwea, (2001) and Mercer, (2003) cited in Haggerty (2007) reported how government would claim to have received and considered the input from CSOs and yet completely ignore it in its adopted decisions. Similar results were reported by Cherry (2007), where a group of CSOs dissatisfied with their involvement in the policy process asserted that 'their contributions were not reflected in the final policy choices' because the 'process itself undermined their effective participation'. Apparently governments are reluctant to embrace stakeholders' perspectives when deciding on policy. Motala and Sookrajh, Gopal, & Maharaj (as cited inDunne, Akyeampong, & Humphreys2007, p. 6) asserted that the realisation of policy intentions was dependent to some degree on the inclusion of local stakeholders' perspectives during policy formulation process, however such perspectives were seldom taken into consideration. Although it is acknowledged that participation of civil society in policy formulation at

national level is important based on the understanding of partnership, equal participation in decision-making and responsibility, civil society is however not always taken as an equal partner. In her study Cherry (2007) found that NGOs with strong international ties exerted large influence on the quality of participation unlike grassroots NGOs. Government was more willing to listen to NGOs with international ties than the local and grassroots NGOs.

Intransigence of government policy actors proved yet another formidable challenge faced by CSOs at the policy table. Cherry (2007, pp. 106-113) found that government comes to the policy table with pre-existing ideas, influenced by the PTFs(donors) about where and how it wants CSOs to participate. Effectively what this meant was that despite holding discussions with the CSOs, government had already made up its mind on the policy issues. Often the position adopted by government was one that was in tandem with the demand of the donor community and CSOs that were in good books with government. Thus government would not shift from its policy position despite input coming from CSOs that contradicted policy position of government. Similarly, Jansen (2003) asserted that having a seat on the policy table was apparently merely for politics of participation, simply rubber-stamping governments' own position on the policy issue at hand thereby legitimating it in the eyes of the donors or development partners. Since government was not keen on having CSOs to influence policy, it tended to restrict the number of seats allocated to it at the policy table. Thus Cherry (2007) reported that there were fewer seats released for them at the policy table such that even where they(CSOs) were accorded a seat at the policy table, their presence at such fora was simply that of legitimation.

Kadzamira & Rose (2003) asserted that, using projects which they fund and implement in the sector, donors continue to exert a lot of influence on education policy in Malawi. Ministry of Education is antagonistic towards NGO involvement in policy making and does not generally consult its stakeholders which include NGOs, teachers, parents, local communities, and local leaders during the policy formulation process Kadzamira & Kunje (2002).

The third challenge was recurrent tension that frequently characterised the relations between the CSOs and government which consequently lead to civil society voices being side-lined from the policy choices being made by government (Mundy et al., 2008). Haggerty(2007) reported of a situation when one NGO was barred from attending policy table meetings because it published in the media research findings which government deemed was in bad taste. In another situation, government side-lined key NGOs from participating in a national education sector review and instead invited smaller NGOs. While side-lining occurred in Tanzania as reported by Haggerty (2007), the voice of TEN/MET was however acknowledged by government and duly credited. To achieve this TEN/MET used participatory methodology in its decision making process which facilitated inclusiveness and ensured that each CSOs' voice was heard and represented at policy table. But this appears not to be the normal experience of many CSOs.

On the other hand, Kornsweig et al. (2006) cited in (Court et al., 2006) reported that although political factors posed as a challenge for CSOs to influence policy, the most critical factors related to CSOs themselves. These included lack of sufficient capacity,

lack of funds and limited understanding about the policy process by members of CSOs. Tomlinson & Macpherson(2007) corroborated these findings by citing CSOs' lack of capacity(information, skills, ability in advocacy and inadequate resources) to advocate for policy issues. Tomlinson & Macpherson (2007) further reported that CSOs' advocacy role was an imposition on them by donors and cited lack of coordination among CSOs as CSOs' key challenges. The study however is of the view that lack of political will by government is the major challenge. Had governments genuinely accepted CSOs as policy partners, they would have provided for capacity building of CSOs to facilitate their work in the sector.

Similar challenges beset local NGOs in Mali where NGOs lacked capacity in national level policy design, policy analysis, advocacy as well as poor collaboration and communication and weak links to the communities they purport to represent (Cherry, 2007). All these challenges impeded the quality of their participation in the policy process and raised doubts over claims of their representativeness in policy process. It was also reported that the policy process was not open to CSOs engagement and policy makers doubted credibility of CSOs' evidence brought to policy table for discussions (Kornsweig, et al 2006, cited in Court et al., 2006).

The fourth challenge had to do with operationalising 'quality participation' which would result into influencing policy. Cherry (2007) found that quality participation meant different things to different actors. According to her, quality participation is not only the

ability of CSOs to influence policy but also the “way participatory processes themselves” operate.

From the reviewed literature, it can be seen that CSOs’ involvement in policy process is beset with a number of challenges. For Malawi, there is limited literature on the types of challenges that CSOs in education sector face since their role shifted from service providers to partners especially in policy formulation. This study therefore intended to explore and document what challenges if any exist during their participation in the policy process.

2.8 Conclusion

Reviewed literature has shown that CSOs in a number of African countries seem to have been accepted as partners in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of educational plans and policies in response to the 2000 Dakar declaration. However, there are still issues with regard to how they access the policy table and policy structures in which they are represented. Reviewed literature has revealed that CSOs determine neither rules nor procedures governing their access to the policy table nor level of policy structure to participate at. While there is no consistency in type of policy structures accessed by CSOs, there seems to be a general pattern in that policy structures accessed are those where policy decision making is not done. In most countries in the reviewed literature, CSOs were mainly represented in structures that had less influence on the final decision of the policy. Further, their main form of involvement was *consultation* whose

outcomes are non-binding on governments and according to Arnstein's ladder of participation *consultation* is not classified as full participation.

The reviewed literature for this study shows that consultations, however ineffectual in influencing policy constitute the main form of CSOs' involvement at the policy table. Literature also indicated that CSOs carry out research to inform policy dialogue and use evidence-based advocacy albeit on a limited scale despite its effectiveness in influencing policy. Their limited capacity in policy analysis, communicating policy issues and failure to do independent research continues to limit CSO' efficacy to influence policy. Literature has also revealed a number of challenges that continue to beset efforts to influence policy at a national level. These include animosity and mistrust between CSOs and government policy actors, poor financial status of CSOs now that DPs have largely stopped funding projects and have gone to SWAp pool funding. Other challenges included poor relations and lack of collaboration among CSOs that sit at the policy table which governments exploit to undermine their influence in the sector. Further, besides DPs exerting a lot of influence that chokes out the CSOs' voice in the sector, limited understanding of the policy process by CSOs has also negatively impacted their role in the sector.

Malawi government seem to have embraced the work of CSOs in the education sector. The sector has introduced SWAp and both NESP (2009) and (GoM, 2009) have provisions for CSOs. However, both these policy documents have not situated CSOs as a partner at the policy table in sync with the Dakar (2000) declaration but rather as service

providers and monitors despite the fact that the SWAp institutionalising guidelines have situated the CSOs in its SWAP structures and accepted them as partners in the policy formulation process. Prior to the SWAp, CSOs interacted with government and DPs in the policy process on an ad hoc basis. Current literature shows that CSOs activities have shifted from advocacy in 2002 two years after government's signing of the 2000 Dakar declarations to more of service delivery. In addition, since 2007 to date, there has been no study known by the researcher, to document how CSOs are participating through the SWAp structures as 'partners' at the national policy table as set by the Dakar Conference. This study purports to document the actual activities that constitute CSOs' participation at the *national* [for emphasis] policy table. As the literature review has shown, CSOs have formidable challenge in influencing education policy in other countries where such studies have been conducted. It is still not yet clear how much leverage CSOs in Malawi have in influencing education policies. The study also documented what CSOs experience has been as they played their highly contentious role as watchdog roles, a role that is expressly provided for them in both NESP and ESIP. One of the major challenges facing CSOs in the sector from the literature reviewed is animosity and mistrust between the CSOs and government policy actors. For Malawi, there is limited literature on the types of challenges that CSOs in the education sector face especially in policy formulation. This study therefore intends to explore and document what challenges if any exist during their participation in the policy process.

The third chapter describes the research design, methodology, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This chapter describes what was done in order to collect the data for answering the research questions pursued in the study. Specifically, the chapter provides the methodology, study design, sampling of participants, data collection methods, data analysis and, finally, ethical considerations.

3.1Methodology

This is a qualitative study whose aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the participation of CSOs during policy process in the education sector in Malawi. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study intended to use people's opinions and experiences through one to one interviews with specific key informants involved in education policy process to answer the question of "how CSOs were involved in the policy process". Hancock (2002) stated that qualitative research seeks to answer why, how and in what way questions and that it is also concerned with opinions, experiences and feeling of individuals and seeks information from specific groups or sub groups of people through interviews. This was achieved by conducting in-depth interviews with key

informants from government, civil society organisations and development partners and also by documents review.

This study chose in-depth interview as a way of collecting data because policy process as a political activity is a highly contentious activity involving expressions of emotions and that is best explored through use of an interview. In his defence for choice of an interview, Denscombe, (2003,p. 165) argued that "if a researcher wants to investigate emotions, experiences and feelings rather than more straight forward factual matters ,then he or she may be justified in preferring interviews to the use of questionnaires". Secondly, as Denscombe (2003, p.165) said, interviews are also best suited for obtaining data based on sensitive issues that may require 'careful handling and perhaps some coaxing in order to get the informant to be open and honest' and also for obtaining data based on 'privileged information from key players in the field' whose privileged information is invaluable to the investigation. Since policy process may involve discussing very sensitive issues in formulating policies, this study felt that in-depth interviews were appropriate because they lend themselves naturally suitable for getting such data from key informants.

Specifically, this study used semi-structured in-depth interview guide. In this type of interview, the interviewer has a 'clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered' (Denscombe, 2003, p.167).However, the interviewee is free to originate and expand his/her own ideas and speak freely and more widely on issues raised by the researcher in an open- ended and more elaborate way. It was the considered view in this

study as described by Denscombe (2003) that exploring participation of actors in a highly contentious process, it was extremely important that respondents ought not feel curtailed or bounded by the questions nor the provided alternative issues to speak from rather, drawing on their own experience of the process be allowed to explore unfettered, those issues they perceived important and of interest to them and in a manner they deemed fit.

This study considered that it was not right for individual respondents to be hedged in by group effect hence the choice of the one to one face interview. Furthermore, this type of interview had other advantages such as ease with which to arrange such interviews and ease of locating views with specific actors. However, according to Denscombe (2003), one disadvantage of the one to one semi-structured interviews is that the quality of the data may be compromised. This would occur in situations where the interviewee may wish to 'fulfil the perceived researcher's expectations'' because he/she knows the researcher. In order to mitigate these effects, the researcher took on characteristics described by Denscombe, (2003), thus, was 'polite and punctual, receptive and neutral, in order to encourage the right climate for an interviewee to feel comfortable and provide honest answers'. The researcher also assured the interviewees that their identities would be concealed by use of codes when reporting or discussing the results in the thesis.

3.1.2 Research Design

This study is a phenomenological study. Phenomena may be a situation, experience or concept (Hancock, 2002). In this study, the phenomena being studied was the participation as experienced by policy actors, hereto referred to as key informants, during

policy process. The study aimed to understand the key informants' 'perception or meanings, attitudes and beliefs, feelings and emotions (Denscombe, 2003) as they 'participate' in the policy process. Arstein's ladder of participation as the conceptual framework was used to understand or explain CSOs participation based on data collected through in-depth interviews with key informants who were mainly policy actors at national level within the education sector in Malawi. According to (Miles & Huberman, 1994) quoted in Maxwell (2008) a conceptual framework 'explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied which can be key factors, concepts, or variables'. From the ladder of participation these variables included manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. These variables constituted the various forms of engagement stakeholders would undertake in the course of their involvement in the policy process in the sector.

3.2 Sampling

The targeted population were persons in organisations that participate in education sector policy process at national level particularly those that sit in the decision-making structures such as ESWG and TWG in MoEST. These consisted of key policy makers in MoEST, Ministry of Planning, Development and Cooperation, Donor and bi-lateral development partners, local NGOs and INGO, and the civil society coalition for quality basic education (CSCQBE) because it has a seat at the ESWG and select member organisations of CSCQBE which are service providers and those that are largely advocacy organisations. Finally, the Parliamentary Committee on Education was also targeted because civil society particularly CSCQBE engages with it annually and it is an

important organ within legislature that engages with education bills before they are passed in Parliament. In total 27 informants were interviewed as summarized in Table 3.1.Purposeful and snowballing sampling techniques were used in this study. For instance, the principal secretary was purposefully selected because he sits in the ESWG and MoEST management body while the directors of all directorates in MoEST sit in one or two of the various TWGs and also on the ESWG. These directorates included Basic Education, Teacher Education and Training, Special Needs Education, Policy and Planning in the MOEST and Monitoring and Evaluation. The key policy maker in Directorate of Planning in Ministry of Planning, Development and Cooperation was also purposefully targeted.

Table 3.1 Summary of number of Key Informants, Category and their Institutions

Informants No.	Category	Institutions/Informant
1	Principal Secretary (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology(MoEST))	MoEST
5	Directors (MoEST)	Directorate of Special Needs Education; Directorate of Basic Education; Directorate of Teacher Education and Development; Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation
2	Officers	Directorate of Policy and Planning (MoEST and Ministry of Planning, Development and Cooperation)
6	Development Partners	DfiD, UNICEF, USAID, JICA,GTZ and CIDA
1	Chairperson	Parliamentary Committee on Education
10	Civil society Organisations	CSCQBE, ACEM,TUM,CARE,LINK,ISAMA,PLAN Mw, Action Aid, FAWEMA,CRECCOM(piloting)
1	International Non-Governmental Organisation	OXFAM
1	Others (Former Director)	Policy and Planning (MoEST) (piloting)

Other key institutions purposefully selected included Development Partners including Department for International Development (DFID), Gesellschaftfür Technische Zusammenarbeit(GTZ), Canadian International Development Agency(CIDA), Japan International Cooperation Agency(JICA), United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United States Agency for International Development(USAID) because these do not only sit at the ESWG and TWG but some were also instrumental in the formulation of the CSCQBE and activities of some member organizations of CSCQBE. Other organisations such as CARE, Forum for Advancement of Women Educators in Malawi (FAWEMA), OXFAM and Action Aid were purposefully sampled because they were involved in the formulation of girls' readmission policy. Others included organizations that currently sit in any of the policy structures in the MOEST including members of CSCQBE such as Association of Christian Educators of Malawi (ACEM) and Teachers' Union of Malawi (TUM) and PLAN Malawi. Snowball sampling was used to get names of CSOs who the selected interviewees felt should also be interviewed to gain further insights into the policy process. These CSOs included Independent Schools Association of Malawi (ISAMA) and LINK for Community Development which were suggested by MoEST and USAID respectively.

3.4 Data Collection

The qualitative data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews with key informants and through document review of national Education Sector Plan and related implementation documents such as ESIP(2009-2013), research study reports and articles in newspapers. Such literature was mainly education plan (NESP, 2009); research report

by LINK on direct support to schools and another by UNICEF on access to education by girls. Key informants in this case were management team in NGOs, INGOs, management staff in all the sampled Directorates of various ministries, and the chairperson of parliamentary committee on education listed Table 3.1.

3.4.1 Interviews with Key Informants

All interviews except one were conducted in Lilongwe, the Capital City because most policy actors involved in national policy process were located in the capital city. This made it easy to access the informants. Only one informant was interviewed in Zomba.

Initially, the researcher had purported to start with CSOs, then development partners and finally ministry policy actors to triangulate the results but this plan changed. The change occurred because appointments for interviews could not neatly fit in the plan and so the researcher conducted interviews with all informants on an 'is available' basis since their availability would not be guaranteed. Informants from Ministry of Finance could not be reached because they were busy with preparations for the national budget sitting of Parliament.

Each interview lasted an average of two hours. The informants were given all freedom to talk about the issues raised by the research questions. However, their descriptions attracted the need for more probing hence interviews were characterised by a lot of probing by the researcher to get to the bottom of issues raised by the informants. In one case only was the interview shortened to about one hour because the informant had to attend to other scheduled affairs. All other informants were benevolent and accorded the

interviewer all the time, in some cases breaking for minutes in between the interview to attend to office telephone calls but these were very few. Only one interview with a key informant from donor community failed even after a physical follow up on an earlier request made in writing.

Additionally, for purposes of triangulation of data, the study used three types of informants: government (ministry policy actors), development partners and civil society policy actors. The data obtained from civil society was checked against information obtained from government and development partners. This was possible because according to the protocols, informants from both government and development partners were answering the same questions while as those on the CSOs had very similar questions to those answered by government and development partners. For instance a question of civil society protocol would be asking 'how do you?' while that on development partners and government would be asking 'how do civil society?' According to Creswell (2009) data triangulation is an important way to establish convergence of information and perspectives of informants. This was particularly imperative since data was obtained through oral interviews.

In some cases knowledge lapses were obvious because the persons involved in the process had either moved on or were deceased. Gaynor (2008, p. 173), commenting on the ease with which to find actors in the policy process involved in the PRSP stated that it is very difficult to find such actors because the 'composition and level of involvement of participants varied significantly' and that 'access to state actors proved very difficult'.

Fortunately, in the present study the suggested persons as informants from two CSOs were found and interviewed.

3.4.2 Institutional documents

Other forms of data to augment primary sources included information from documents, a rich source of information and perceived as authoritative since they are written by professionals' therefore credible, objective and factual (Denscombe, 2003).Documents have several advantages as source of information; allow the researcher to access the language and words of participants; represents data that is assumed to be thoughtful; is an unobtrusive form of data collection and can be readily accessed by the researcher and finally it saves the researcher time and expense of transcribing data (Creswell, 2009).However, Creswell (2009) warns the researcher on being naïve to assume that documents may be as objective or credible as expected hence the need to be wary and critical when reviewing documents for research purposes.

This study used the following documents NESP (2009), ESIP (2009-2013), PIF, MGDS Report (2009), The Country Status Report (2009) because these are key policy documents that define the course of action in education sector. The MGDS and the Constitution for the country were also consulted because they define broader policy issues that have a bearing on education. For instance the republican constitution prescribes who should make policy. Other documents included study reports by LINK community development, ACEM and UNICEF on specific research that they conducted and informed some education policy such as direct support to schools and girls'

readmission policy from MoEST. Additionally, two key theses one by Cherry (2007) and another by Haggerty (2007) plus others referred to in literature review were consulted for the study.

The study found it very difficult to access records of proceedings of the ESWG, TWG and one to one meetings between DPs chair, ACEM, LINK and MoEST that had a bearing on some policy issues for instance the Rural Hardship Allowance, and Direct Support to Schools. These were confidential material and not for public consumption. These documents would have helped to ascertain that input from CSOs had indeed informed policy. However, in the absence of such documentation, triangulation of statements among the three types of informants would give credence to claims by CSOs to have informed respective policy.

3.5 Data Management Procedures

Data from interviews with key informants were audio-taped. The audio-taped interviews were transcribed. Once transcribed, data was checked to identify emerging gaps or lack of clarity. Data from documents, in the form of short notes, comments, and summaries were also typed, indicating source, to have an electronic copy and again stored as transcribed audio-taped data.

Interview short notes were made in a hard copy book to prevent loss of loose sheets and typed to have an electronic copy of the same. All data was stored according to date, place of interview, interviewee (coded) and type of organisation (government, NGOs or

Development partner or Parliament). Data from interviewees was accordingly labelled primary and that from documents as secondary (Creswell, 2009).

3.6 Data Analysis

Data was arranged according to type of organisation: civil society, government, and INGO and DPs. All informants were coded thus: MoEST informants (M1, M2…), civil society organisations as (C1, C2 …) and development partners as (DP1, DP2….) where the number represents the chronological order of interviewing the informant among that category. The coding process facilitated the next step which is the generation of themes for analysis Creswell (2009). The task involved segmenting sentences or indeed paragraphs into categories and labelling these categories according to emergent issues and themes with a term following the language used by the respondents in the transcribed data. In order to get a gist of the information, the transcribed data was read and re-read and thoughts, questions and underlying meanings were written down to create sub themes.

This study used research questions to form the main themes. Thus all responses to the same research question were under one theme for instance participation in policy formulation. However, these responses were further subdivided according to category of informant whether the responses were from civil society, government or development partners. Under each category of informant for instance under the theme preparation to attend policy table meetings, emergent issues like late invitations, delayed or lack of access to key documentation relevant to dialogue were noted and coded. Most cited

issues were noted as major concerns among the policy actors from the three categories and constituted sub themes to be subjected to further analysis. Less recurring issues among the informants were just noted.

These themes and subthemes eventually constituted the major headings in the findings sections of the research. According to Creswell (2009) these should display multiple perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence as portrayed by the data. Subsequently, a detailed discussion of the themes and sub themes using the available data and literature was provided. In this regard, an attempt was made to describe the nuances of policy process in education sector in Malawi based on the available information as a qualitative narrative. Finally, the data was interpreted by asking questions like "what were the lessons learned?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 cited in Creswell, 2009).Such interpretation was derived from a comparison of the findings with information gleaned from the literature or theories and documents. According to Creswell (2009) study findings either confirm past findings or diverge from it. These are reflected in the conclusions and recommendations sections of this study.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the study and ethical Issues

Trustworthiness is about ensuring that others consider the findings of the research or decisions arising from the same worth taking account of. This can only be achieved by ensuring that the findings are neutral. According to Lincoln and Guba cited in Babbie & Mouton (2006), trustworthiness in qualitative research, based on the notions of objectivity is the key criterion or principle of good qualitative research.

To make sure that the study is trustworthy the study adapted some of the issues and aspects of a similar study by Cherry (2007) during the development of the protocols. Cherry (2007) studied participation of CSOs in education policy formulation and implementation in Mali. Some issues and aspects of participation raised in related literature on participation of CSOs in education policy were used to enrich the protocols. For instance inclusion in the protocols issues of involvement of CSOs in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation and role of development partners in capacity building CSOs. Further, the instruments used for the semi-structured interviews were first piloted on two types of informants: ministry policy actor and one of the active CSOs in the education sector. The experience from both informants helped to confirm that the protocols were able to generate the information required for the study and were adjusted accordingly.

Ethics is about what is right or wrong and this is context dependent (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Hence a social researcher must adhere to what is moral in the course of doing research. For this study, the researcher did not deceive the participants of research by explaining fully to them the objectives and purpose of the study and sought their consent to participate in the study before involving them in interviews. The researcher also ensured that the questions in the study were framed in such a way as to respect the views of the participants and not to harm them psychologically, emotionally and physically. The participants were assured that all the information given by them would be treated with strict confidentially and that no source of any information given would be disclosed without their consent and in this regard to ensure anonymity, no names of respondents

were used. The participants were also informed that the information collected from them would be used solely for academic purposes. Permission was also sought from the participants to tape record the interviews after explaining why it is necessary to do so. The interviews were conducted at a time and mostly within their premises of work except for one informant from MoEST whose interview took place in another town away from their place of work but of their own choice.

3.8 Chapter summary

This is a qualitative study. It used a phenomenological study design. Key informants were selected through purposeful sampling and snowballing. A semi-structured interview guide was used to obtain data. Data was analysed qualitatively to identify sub themes and triangulation and document review helped to establish convergence of issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.0 Chapter Overview

The chapter presents the findings according to the research questions. The first part presents findings on what documents state about the structures and secondly it presents informants' views on policy structures that exist and their functions. The second part aims at exploring how CSOs are involved in the education policy making process. Thus the section describes education policy making in the sector and how the CSOs are involved in the process. It also provides the views of the policy actors about the policy making process. The third part of the chapter provides answers to the third research question; about the views of the CSOs on their participation in the whole education policy process. This section describes their views about policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Finally the chapter presents answers to the fourth research question, which was about challenges faced by CSOs in the policy process.

4.1 Representation of CSOs in the Policy Structures

The first research question was: How is the civil society represented in the policy structure of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology? To answer this question, the study turned first to key informants to mention the policy structures and then how CSOs are represented in the mentioned structures.

4.1.1 Policy structures in the sector

Some informants requested for an explanation of what was meant by policy structures while others did not. For instance typical responses would be as follows:

> (…) what do you mean by policy structures? (M4, DP3, C9)

> (…)You should explain, I just want to make sure that I provide…the correct answer to your question *(MoEST Key informant, M1)*

In contrast, other policy actors mentioned the policy structures without difficulty. For instance:

> I think first and foremost, it is important to recognize the establishment of education policy and planning department which has the overall responsibility of looking into issues to do with policy formulation, and implementation. (…) there is what is called sector working group (SWG), which provides overall policy guidance. Under it there are Technical working groups (TWGs) looking into specific aspects of their expertise (…). (*Key informant, civil society*, C5)

> We have, what we call technical committees, technical working groups (TWGs) which comprise people from the government, private sector and the civil society,…national steering committees comprise government, private sector and the civil society, …sector working groups (SWGs) where all stakeholders meet which focuses more on policy and then we have a joint sector review which comes once every year, where donors and the government and the civil society come together to review the progress in education, that is also a policy forum.*(Key informant, civil society*, C1)

Table 4.1 gives a summary of the policy structures as reported by the various informants categorised from commonly to least reported structures. The table shows that many CSOs are aware of the SWAp structures (ESWG, TWG and STF) while DPs appear to have had knowledge of most of the structures reflected in the table. Not all key informants in the ministry knew most of the policy structures besides the SWAp structures. However, according to the guidelines for the institutionalisation of the Sector Working Groups (SWGs), policy structures only include SWG, TWGs, and STFs(Malawi, 2008). Further, according to the Terms of Reference (ToRs) developed by the MoEST based on the same guidelines and NESP (2009), the education sector has only one ESWG, eight (TWGs, and four STFs (see Annex 1). These findings show that there are other additional policy structures that were not in the initial guidelines.

Table 4.1: Summary of Policy structures mentioned by various informants

Policy structure	**Informants**
Main	
Education Sector Working Group (ESWG),	DP1, DP2, DP3, DP4, DP5, DP6, L1, M1,M2,M3,M4,M7, C1,C2,C5,C7, C8 and C10.
Technical Working Groups (TWGs),	
Systems Task Forces (STF)	
Commonly mentioned	
Management at Ministerial level	M2,M6,C7and L1
Inter-ministerial committee	M1,DP4,DP5 and DP6
Cabinet Committee on Education	M1,DP5 and C8,
Development Partners	DP2,DP3and C5
Parliamentary Committee on Education	C5, C7 and L1
Least mentioned	
Education Sector Technical Working Committee	M1 and C5
Management at Directorate level	DP4 and C6
Directorate of Planning	C5 and DP5
Office of the President and Cabinet	M7

What came out of the results was that informants were aware of the SWAp policy structures. However, there was a discrepancy on the nature of STFs and number of TWGs. While informants reported that STFs were demand driven and therefore not permanent, the Annex shows these to be permanent structures. Further, informants reported nine TWGs and yet the Annex shows eight. Another finding was that not all structures involved in policy making were reported by each informant, with some reporting more or much fewer than others. Of even more interest is the fact that development partners were reported as a policy structure by some civil society and government informants.

4.1.2 Representation of civil society on EWSG

Thus having established the policy structures that exist in the education sector, informants answered the question: How is the civil society represented in the policy structure of the MoEST? All informants reported representation of civil society operating in the education sector in either, ESWG, TWG or STFs. For instance, two informants reported that:

> In all these structures from the technical working group to the sector working group, there is high participation of civil society organisations. In all these [a representative of CSCQBE] sit in the sector working group. (C5*)*

> The education sector working group which include the government, development partners, the civil society even the private sector,…..the technical working groups are one level lower than the SWG, ….and below the technical working groups, we have what they call systems task forces.(*DP6)*

Informants also reported that the ESWG replaced the Policy and Planning Committee and was now broad and varied, comprising of most key players in the sector such as Secretary for Education Science and Technology (SEST),the chair of the development partners, principal secretaries and directors; development partners such as UNESCO, DFID, CIDA, GIZ, UNICEF, and JICA; principal secretaries or directors from other ministries that have a stake in education such as Ministry of Finance; Sports and Youth Development; Gender, Child and Community Development; and Economic Planning and Development. The ESWG is chaired by the SEST and co-chaired by the coordinator of the development partners (M1, M2, M4, C5 and DPs).

According to the SWG's institutionalisation guidelines, CSOs must be represented in the ESWG: 'participants in the ESWG should include senior representatives from Government, DPs, NGOs, and the private sector' (Malawi Government, 2008, p.6). The guidelines outline that the SWG for education sector should comprise MoEST, University of Malawi, Malawi Institute of Education, National Library services, Malawi National Examinations Board, Scholarship Fund, Malawi College of Health Services, Mzuzu University, National Resources College Trust, University Student Trust Fund and University of Science and Technology. The development Partners include ADB, CIDA, DFID, GTZ/KfW, JICA, Dutch, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank. The civil society membership includes MACOHA, ACEM, ECM, Evangelical Association of Malawi, ISAMA, PRISAM, FAWEMA and Teachers Union of Malawi and CSCQBE.

The results show that civil society is represented in the ESWG. Additionally, the composition of the ESWG as reported by the informants concurs with that stipulated by the guidelines since most organisations reported are as prescribed by the guidelines.

4.1.2.1 Informants' knowledge of roles of ESWG

As a follow-up question to the representation question, informants were asked what they do when they sit at the ESWG. In response to the question, informants reported that the ESWG was an overall committee responsible for all matters and activities of the MoEST and was thus responsible for policymaking, to review and critique policy options submitted to it by the TWGs and make recommendations to MoEST senior management. It deals with issues from a technical point of view and not from management point of view and was therefore not supposed to be the final authority on policy in the sector. It only recommends to senior management which ultimately makes the decision (M1, DP4, and DP6). Informants also reported that the ESWG monitors performance of the sector through reviewing reports of implementation of Programme of Works (PoW) submitted to it by TWGs and through the annual Joint Education Sector Review where representatives of all policy actors including civil society participate:

> (…) we have a Joint Sector Review which comes once every year, where donors and the government and the civil society come together to review the progress in education……that is also a policy forum. (*C5)*

According to the SWG's institutionalisation guidelines, the ESWG is the sector's management structure and a "forum for negotiation, policy dialogue, and agreement of plans and undertakings among stakeholders at sectoral level" expressly for "harmonising

sector policy development, planning, budgeting, execution, and monitoring and evaluation" (Government of Malawi, 2008, p. 2 and p. 4). Some of the specific activities for the ESWG include:

- 'guiding the effective coordination and implementation of sector strategies and policies and 'consolidate a medium term Sector Strategic Plan and annual Programme of Work and budget' which are 'developed in a fully participatory fashion, integrating NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders in all sector planning and budgeting efforts'(Government of Malawi, 2008, p. 7).
- 'oversee the implementation of the sector's result-oriented M and E , and reporting mechanisms to promote results oriented programme implementation across Government(Government of Malawi, 2008,p. 8).
- 'enhance mutual accountability by initiating and organising Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) and managing all sectoral aspects of the MGDS Annual Review'.

The Malawi NESP (2009, p. 8) has recognised the need for the inclusion of civil society as partners in education and ascribes among others the following roles and responsibilities to them: 'assist in articulating government policy to masses, monitor government performance in provision of primary education services, support the provision of high quality primary education through construction of buildings, provision of services and adherence to standards set by government and as watchdog of government expenditure'. It is intriguing how persistent the perception of civil society organisations as service providers is in the roles ascribed to the CSOs in NESP (2009) and in a sense contradicts some roles provided for CSOs in the SWAp institutionalisation

guidelines (Government of Malawi, 2008, p. 2 and p. 4). Restricting CSOs largely to that of 'users' of policy and not 'partners and co-developers' of policy says a lot about their positioning in the sector. This starkly contrasts with the experience of TEN/MET in Tanzania.

The results indicate that there is some degree of consistency in informants' knowledge of functions of the ESWG and its ToRs with respect to policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation even of the Programme of Works (PoW), and Joint sector review. However, while the guidelines indicate that the ESWG is an overall management structure; informants have relegated this function to senior management of ministry hence restricting their role to that of being advisory only.

4.1.3 Representation of civil society organisations on TWGs

Similarly, the informants were asked: How is the civil society represented on TWGs in the policy structure of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology? In answer to the question, informants reported that civil society is represented on TWGs in that the composition of the TWG on Teacher Education comprises:

> Development Assistance from People to People, Association of Christian Educators in Malawi, Teachers Union of Malawi and private universities such as the Catholic University. *(M4)*

Informants also reported that the TWGs are of varying sizes and level of organisation with some better organised and more active than others:

> TWG on basic education is the biggest and most well represented by civil society (DP4).

Informants also reported that there were 9 Technical working groups (TWG) and that each TWG is chaired by a director in the respective directorate. The TWGs mentioned included:

> Basic education, Cross cutting issues such as Gender and HIV and AIDS, Governance and management, Higher education, Finance, M and E, Communication, Teacher Education, and infrastructure development (M2,M4)

Technical Working Groups are the main locus for the civil society organisations in the sector. According to their ToRs, civil society must also be represented in TWGs and STFs where together with government policy actors, development partners and the private sector ought to conduct technical consultations 'to support the Education sector and MoEST'. MoEST is the key implementing institution in planning and implementation of different sub sector policies/ strategies and are answerable to the ESWG (Appendix E.). Table 4.2 gives a quick snap shot of the civil society representation in the TWGs focussing on the CSOs that were interviewed in the present study. From Table 4.2we can see that CSOs are not represented in each of the 8 TWG as stipulated by the guidelines. The CSOs are completely absent from TWG 7 and 8 on infrastructure and management and governance respectively. This may be due to CSOs being allocated according to their specialised activity in the sector as reflected by TUM and ACEM. Some CSOs are represented in two TWGs while others are only represented in one TWG. On the other hand ministry policy actors, particularly from the planning directorate are represented in all the TWGs perhaps because policy making falls under their jurisdiction. Development partners are also present in all the TWGs with some appearing in more than four or five TWGs.

Table 4.2 Representation of CSOs, MoEST and development partners in TWGs

No.	Policy Structure (TWG)	Civil Society actor	Other MoEST actor	Development partner , other actor
1	Basic Education (DBE) [DfiD, co-chair]	CSCQBE, ISAMA	Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED), Directorate of Education Planning (DEP)	USAID, UNICEF,JICA,CIDA
2	Secondary Education [JICA,co-chair]	ACEM,LEG,PRISAM	Directorate of Education Planning (DEP)	USAID
3	Department of Teacher Education [CIDA,co-chair]	TUM, Development Aid from People to People(DAPP)	Directorate of Education Planning (DEP)	DfiD, USAID, JICA, GIZ
4	Tertiary Education(DHE) [AfDB,co-chair]	Society of Accountants, Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi	Directorate of Education Planning (DEP)	NORAD,WB
5	Cross Cutting Issues [WfP,co-chair]	Montfort College	Directorate of Education Planning(DEP) , Directorate of Special Needs Education(DSNE)	USAID,UNICEF,GIZ
6	Quality and Standard [UNICEF,co-chair]	CSCQBE, Private Universities, LINK, ISAMA, CERT	DBE,DSNE,DTED,DEP ,DHE	USAID,CIDA,GIZ, UNICEF
7	Infrastructure [GIZ,co-chair]	-	Directorate of Education Planning (DEP)	DfiD, WB, AfDB, JICA
8	Management and Governance [USAID,co-chair]	-	Directorate of Education Planning (DEP)	DfiD, WB,JICA

Source: Adapted from Appendix E

4.1.3.1 Informants' knowledge of roles of TWG

As a follow-up question to the representation question, informants were asked what they do when they sit at the TWG. In response to the question, informants reported that TWGs are spaces where stakeholders including CSOs and donor agencies participate and affect the content and implementation of education policies:

> TWGs deliberate on the content and implementation of the education policies and serve as advisory committees to the Government. Additionally, TWGs also monitor policy implementation during quarterly meetings through reports presented by respective directorates. Oversee the implementation of the PoW in the directorate, inform education policy through evidence based decision making by promoting opportunity for research and therefore annually come up with research agenda as part of TWG implementation agenda, review policy text (in black and white) against policy in practice and resolve the gaps. (*M2)*

> The responsibility of the technical working group is not really to make decision, but to advise, to provide alternative solutions and have adequate discussion on an issue and then recommend to the ESWG which is the highest level.(DP6)

Informants also reported that each TWG has functions specific to its subsector (DP4, DP6, M1, M2, M3, and M4). For instance, TWG of Teacher Education is mandated to conduct training for teachers, discusses policy issues of student intake into teacher training colleges such as 50:50 student intake into TTCs, mode of training for teachers like Open and Distance Learning (ODL), recruitment of supervisors for the ODL programme and issues of access such as construction of primary school teachers training colleges (TTCs), and construction of ladies hostels in TTCs. Periodically it also commissions research and receives research reports for instance the study on teacher education and deployment by ACEM (M4,DPs).

In contrast to the TWG on teacher education, some key informants reported that the ToRs for TWG on basic education include: discuss issues such as adult literacy, repetition and teacher pupil ratios in primary school, primary school pupil attainment levels e.g. on Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), discuss, review and critique concept papers on prospective policies in the sector e.g. repetition policy, operations of the direct support to schools for instance whether or not primary schools should open school bank accounts under the direct support to schools policy(M2,C1). Despite such reports on activity in the TWG, some development partners lamented that deliberations in the TWG largely bordered on reporting progress and not much on TWG being used as a 'think tank' for the sector (DP4).

According to ToRs of TWGs and STFs (Appendix D), TWGs contribute to comprehensive subsector 'Political, Economic, Technological and Social' (PETS) and 'strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats' (SWOT) analysis of the subsectors. They also 'provide professional advice on development/ review of sub sector policies/strategies and sub sector budgeting, contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the sub sectors in key priority areas and establish, with approval from SWAp Technical committee, sub technical working groups or task forces on priority areas as need may be'. Since these ToRs are generic, each TWG had to develop its own ToRs specific to its directorate and this is reflected in the examples of the ToRs for basic education and Teacher education and development.

These findings show that the ToRs of the reported TWGs on basic education and teacher development are specific to their respective directorates. This is in compliance with the specification in the guidelines that each TWG should develop ToRs specific to its directorate. Secondly, the activities also broadly conform to prescribed ToRs in guidelines with respect to TWGs providing professional advice to the ESWG on policy in the sector through evaluation of the PoW, budget and analysis of policy issues.

4.1.4 Representation of civil society organisations on STFs

Similarly just like for the other policy structures, the informants were asked: How is the civil society represented on STFs? In answer to the question, informants reported that Systems Task Forces are made up of experts in the requisite area, persons with practical experience in the area but within education sector or may include technical persons from other sectors. These structures have various compositions depending on the need and function they would be required to perform:

> As it is always the case, taskforces will be needed to address specific tasks, and to bring in their recommendations to the Technical Working Groups. You can even enlist members from other sectors.(*M1)*

These findings reveal a stark difference between the guidelines and what informants reported with respect to existence of the STFs. While reporters indicated that such structures were brought into being by demand, the guidelines show standing structures.

4.1.4.1 Informants' knowledge of the roles of systems task forces

As a follow-up question to the representation question, informants were asked what they do when they sit at the STFs. In answer to the question, some informant revealed that they were aware of some of the tasks forces. For instance:

> .....because in the technical working groups its oversubscribed, and then, there are several opinions to an issue, so you need the systems task force to dig around it, or maybe to develop papers and do the analysis and then present the major outcomes to TWG.(DP6)

For example, a task force from TWG on teacher education was once created with the due purpose of:

> .....looking into the disparity between male and female student teacher intake into TTCs where the number of female students was not equal to that of male students in teacher training colleges despite several efforts by the Ministry (M4).

According to the ToRs, the specific tasks of the STFs include 'synergise the work of all key actors in the domain, contribute to the analysis of specific agreed issues and develop roadmap leading to establishment of the domain system and contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the domain system'.

From the findings, there seems to be consistency in the ToRs as per guidelines and what the STFs actually do particularly in conducting analysis of issues and providing recommendations to the TWG.

4.2 Involvement of civil society in education policy making process.

The second research question was: How is civil society involved in Education Policy making process? Informants responded that civil society organisations are involved in the policy making process through a number of ways which include generating policy issues, agenda-setting, generating evidence to inform policy, contributing towards development of policy implementation guidelines, analysis of policy issues and development of policy drafts, advocate for policy change, and contribute to policy dialogue during policy making process in ESWG and TWG.

4.2.1 Generating policy issues/agenda setting

Informants reported that civil society generates policy issues to inform policy development process from their everyday experiences and learning as they implement projects in the education sector:

> Those of us in the civil society may initiate something like a pilot initiative. Through the benefits of that pilot initiative which government sees, government may turn that into a policy. *(C1)*

Some of these projects are under the auspices of the MoEST or development partners:

> You know, you could have a project out in Nsanje say GIZ or USAID, or (…) and you know that out of that experiment could come out a policy, like the Direct Support to Schools is the World Bank designed intervention. (*M1)*

Informants also reported that alternatively, civil society contributes to identification of policy issues as they review education policy implemented in the sector during annual Joint Sector Reviews (DP3, DP4, DP5, M1, M2 and M7):

> Annually, we always have a joint sector review involving all the stakeholders and in those cases issues come up and probably those are some of the issues that are tasked to the technical working group to do the technical refining of them and then we form a policy *(DP4).*

4.2.2 Generating evidence to inform development of policy

Apart from generating policy issues, civil society also generates evidence to inform policy development. Informants reported that civil society generates evidence through implementing demonstrative projects under the auspices of development partners expressly to generate evidence to inform development of envisaged policy. In this regard the funding agency worked very closely, throughout the project cycle, with the CSO that was generating the evidence (DP4 and DP5):

> We provide evidence that goes into the draft policy; as advisors we make sure that all the issues are captured in the policy statement such that in the drafting stage we facilitate it; we don't write but we read the draft each time they [CSOs implementing donor funded intervention] write because we are financing the project.*(DP5)*

Informants also reported that civil societies carry out research that provides evidence to justify for development of a particular policy:

> (…) we also have research as a strong programme, and those of us that do advocacy cannot do without research because research gives us evidence from which we will be backing our proposals in policy shaping, policy reviews.(*C1)*

Apart from generating policy issues, civil society organisations also develop policy briefs in collaboration with DPs from evidence generated from demonstrative projects and present it to respective TWGs or ESWG to inform policy dialogue (DP4 and DP5).

4.2.3 Contribute towards development of policy implementation guidelines

Once in a while policy in education sector comes as a directive. When such a directive occurs, the ministry would simply be required to develop 'policy' implementation guidelines (M1, M2, M3, M6, C1 and DP4):

> Sometimes government simply imposes a policy on the sector due to donor pressure. For instance the conversion of the distance education centres offering education through the distance mode into community day secondary schools (CDSS) which was done against all advice because a donor was willing to bank roll the process.*(C1)*

> ....the development of higher education was a presidential directive that he[President] wants five new universities built. Such policies therefore do not originate from TWGs or ESWG and therefore Ministry starts working from that end. (*DP4)*

Other consultative forums may be organised by ministry where civil society organisations get involved outside the sector policy structures as it seeks input from its stakeholders on how to implement the directive (M1, M2).

4.2.4 Analysis of policy issues and development of policy drafts

Informants reported that civil society also sits in STFs where they contribute towards analysis of policy issues and come up with recommendations to TWGs:

> As it is always the case, taskforces will be needed to address specific tasks, and (…) to bring in their recommendations to the TWGs, so its where you can even go to outsiders (other sectors) to enrich that piece of work, so that when it comes to the TWG level it's well cooked (…). *(M1)*

4.2.5 Advocate for policy change

CSOs are also involved in policy making by advocating for policy change. For instance, at the time of writing the thesis civil society was advocating for the adoption of compulsory primary education (C5, M2). It does so through various forums such as the Global Campaign for Education Week or through the media (M2). Additionally, civil society can advocate for policy change through its meetings as CSCQBE with Parliamentary Committee on Education for instance to lobby for more budgetary allocation to education (C5, M2, L). Besides, civil society reported that it also lobbies for more funding to education sector using evidence obtained from the annual budgetary tracking conducted by the civil society coalition for quality basic education.

4.2.6 Contribution to policy dialogue during policy making process within TWGs and ESWG

As members of the ESWG and TWGs, civil society also participates in deliberating concept papers brought to the policy table by directors from respective directorates. Informants reported that once a policy issue has been deliberated and adopted by the TWG, the next phase of policy making is development of a concept paper to inform the development of requisite policy. Informants reported that the directorate is charged with the mandate to develop the concept paper. The concept paper would be developed singularly by a director or by such a person as delegated by the director or else be developed through consultations with colleagues within their directorate in which case civil society are not involved(M1,M2). Once developed, the concept paper is presented to

middle management at directorate level for discussion and adoption. Once adopted, the director presents the concept paper to the TWG for discussion and its input (M2).

Once satisfied with the extent of consultations and quality of the resulting concept paper, the TWG presents the concept paper back to management at directorate level where it is thoroughly scrutinised. Usually the director or delegated member of the directorate makes the presentation to management meetings which are chaired by principal secretaries (M1 and M2). All three principal secretaries in the ministry are sometimes in attendance during such meetings. The concept paper is then thoroughly scrutinised and if need be the directorate is advised on necessary changes to be made to the concept paper. It is afterwards submitted to the ESWG for its input. Once the ESWG has adopted the concept paper, it is recommended to senior management of MoEST. After this point, civil society organisations are institutionally excluded from the policymaking process because the structures involved do not have civil society as members but exclusively ministry policy actors as will be described in the next subsection.

4.3 Policy making process using ministry management structures

The final stages of the policy making process largely occur within education senior management structures. This has been summarised into Figure 4.1 on p. 83. Although this description does not dwell on the role of the CSOs in policy making, it is an important phase in the policy making process and demonstrates how institutionally the CSOs are left out of the process.

Thus upon receipt of the concept paper as recommendation from ESWG, the senior management discusses it, making changes where necessary. Once approved by senior management at MoEST, the concept paper is submitted to the Minister of Education, Science and Technology with clear explanations of the ministry's intention: that of seeking the minister's approval for the development of a new policy. If the minister determines that the concept paper requires input from other government ministries, he or she would request the responsible directorate to consult other relevant ministries for their input. After such consultations and the concept paper has been approved by the minister it is then presented to the inter-ministerial committee comprising principal secretaries from various ministries for approval. Once this committee approves the concept paper it is sent back to the originating directorate for development into a draft cabinet paper. This cabinet paper is drafted by the concerned directorate because it is believed that it is more intimate with the issues and can therefore be more articulate. At this point, the draft cabinet paper is called 'zero draft'. According to some informants, due to its confidential nature, the 'zero draft' is developed by one person usually the director, deputy director or indeed such person as delegated by the director. It is the 'zero draft' that is then passed on to the Policy and Planning Directorate within MoEST for 'fine tuning'.

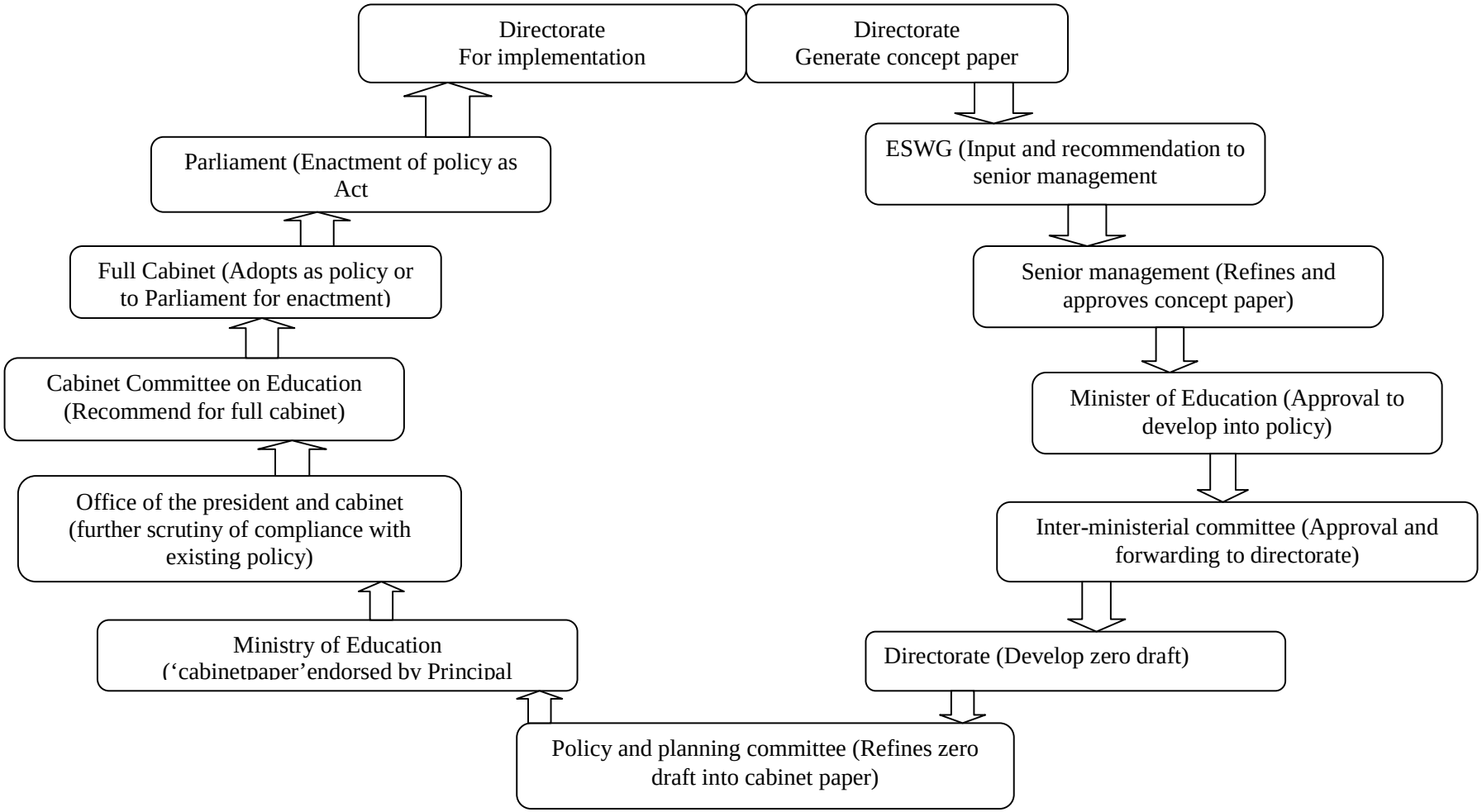

Figure 4.1 Policy Formulation Process from Concept Paper to Policy: back and forth movement from each level

Once the principal secretary signs off the zero draft, it is submitted to a committee made up of principal secretaries from all government ministries in the Office of the President and Cabinet for further scrutiny to ensure compliance and avoid conflict with existing policies in their respective various ministries. Once the principal secretaries are satisfied, the ‘zero draft’ is passed on to the minister who presents it to the cabinet committee on education where it is again critiqued and receives further input. The cabinet committee on education then decides if the ‘cabinet paper’ should go on to the full cabinet for final discussions and subsequent decision making and adoption as policy. Depending on the nature of the proposed policy, informants reported that cabinet would decide that the ‘policy’ should go to parliament for deliberation and subsequent adoption as an Act of parliament. While the described process was expected to be the normal one of policy development, a senior policy maker in MoEST was quick to admit that for various reasons the process was not always adhered to:

> But I must admit that there are times when some of these stages are skipped just for one reason or another just to make things done quickly (M1).

The foregoing description of policy making using ministry management structures reveals how the process institutionally ostracises the CSOs from participating in the final stages of the policy making process having involved them at the start of the process. As can be seen, the drafting of the policy does not involve CSOs and hence poses a danger of including 'constructs' that CSOs have no knowledge about nor consented to their inclusion. Section 4.4 describes the policy making process that does not include the CSOs from the beginning to the end of the process.

4.4 Policy making without any involvement of CSOs

Alternatively, policy can be development using MoEST management structures alone once an issue has been identified. The brief summary below is given by a director and is a typical example of such a path:

> Then you do a concept paper through consultations with district education managers, division education managers and within the directorate, and then afterwards once it is done, you [as directorate] table it before management team to get input from senior management; then it (concept paper) goes to the Minister's office for input from all the principal secretaries (PSs) in government [MoEST].…….; and if it is necessary that it goes to the cabinet, it has to pass through the cabinet committee on education which is a committee made up of a few cabinet ministers that will discuss and agree if it is necessary for the concept paper to go to full cabinet. The full cabinet considers the paper and if it agrees to it, the concept paper becomes policy. If however, what was required were just policy guidelines for implementing a policy then the final decision is taken by the honourable minister if there are no issues of a legal nature to consider (…), otherwise she/he will refer the paper to the Ministry of Justice for vetting and their advice. The directorate then sends the policy or guidelines to the people on the ground to implement. (*M2)*

Another senior policy actor in the ministry reported that the urgency of the matter usually dictated ministry's use of this route for policy making that effectively excludes CSOs. Only structures within the ministry are consulted except when legal advice is sought that another ministry is consulted before policy is made and implemented. Since civil society come into the policy fray through the sector structures, they are obviously left out. This may have negative implications on the quality of the policy made and also affect its implementation.

4.5 Views and perspectives of the civil society organisations about their participation in education policy process

To get the views and perspectives about the participation of CSOs in education policy process, all informants were asked the following questions: How do CSOs get to the policy seat (both TWGs and ESWG)?; How do CSOs prepare for participation on the policy seat and ensure that their contributions are credible?; How do informants perceive the effectiveness of CSOs in the policy process?; and finally How can CSOs improve their participation in the policy process?

4.5.1 How CSOs get to the policy seat on ESWG and TWG

When asked how the CSOs get to the policy seat, TWG and ESWG, all informants reported that they have to get a formal invitation to either a TWG or ESWG meeting. Thus each member besides having a schedule for such meetings has to get a formal invitation (DP4, DP6, C1, C5, DP1, M2, M1, M4, M3, and C7)

The SWAP secretariat invites members to the ESWG (DP4, DP6, and DP3) while the directorates invite members to the TWG meetings on behalf of ministry. Generally all informants reported that the invitation letters usually include quarterly reports when they are ready (DP4, M4) plus an agenda for the meeting. The informants reported four types of criteria used for a CSO to be invited to membership of and participation in the ESWG and the TWG, namely directors' discretion, magnitude of work being implemented in the sector, nature of work being implemented and relevance of CSO's work in the sector to the envisaged policy.

4.5.1.1 Directors' discretion

All CSOs reported that the sanction to invite them to any of the policy structures was solely that of the inviting agency be it the SWAp secretariat or indeed the director of any respective directorate. This was confirmed by the response by one director in the MoEST:

> This decision to involve in TWG other big NGOs that are working on big projects that we [as directorate], are implementing as part of our programme of works was my own as director. This is because in the TWG, we are also looking at progress of implementation of our programmes and other policy issues that come up as a result of implementation. So you need people who are on the ground to tell you what is happening, what is working and what is not working. You can only confirm when you go to the field. But if you leave those people out and you rely on CSCQBE, it may not be adequate…….The representation of these other CSOs on TWGs is not a formal one as that of CSCQBE although the intention is that at each and every meeting you want to have consistency in terms of representation, so these also consistently appear as part of the invitees.*(M2)*

4.5.1.2 Magnitude of work being implemented in sector

Both government and civil society informants reported that the magnitude of work being implemented by particular CSOs in the sector was a factor for the invitation of CSOs. For instance, although ACEM is a member of the CSCQBE, ACEM still gets invited as a separate entity because it runs a lot of schools in the country (M2, DP1, and C7).

> There are other meetings where we also invite ACEM because they are responsible for so many schools……. We have invited them separate from the CSCQBE because I personally felt if we said we have CSCQBE it may not at times represent the best interests of the other players on the ground. (M2)

4.5.1.3 Relevance to envisaged policy

The relevance of a CSO's work to the envisaged policy was another criterion for invitation. For instance NGOs working in the area of disability in the sector were invited to the policy table during development of the special needs education policy. Even students of special needs from universities were invited as potential beneficiaries of the policy (M3). Again discretionary powers of a director are being brought to bear on the choice of who among CSOs sits at the policy seat albeit dependent on the 'suitability ' of the respective NGOs in this case whether their work was deemed invaluable resource in the policy process. It can be construed from here that different CSOs sit at different TWGs depending on the nature of policy being developed.

4.5.1.4 Nature of CSOs' work in the sector

Another key criterion, as per informants' reports that is used to invite CSOs to the policy table was the nature of their work. Thus CSOs which were largely in advocacy work and not implementing any projects were usually not invited to sit at the policy table. In the words of one key policy maker at MoEST, such NGOs were simply noise makers and critical of government without offering possible solutions (M2):

> The CSOs are in two categories: one we would call noise makers and one would not even listen to them and other very good ones who help us implement our programmes on the ground.(M2)

4.5.2 Constraints with getting to the policy seat

Informants reported two main issues in relation to getting to the policy table, which were agenda and the invitation:

4.5.2.1 Agenda

While invitation letters for the scheduled policy table meetings usually included quarterly reports plus an agenda, it was generally agreed among informants that agenda would not be provided. Occasionally the agenda for a meeting would be provided at the time of the meeting (C11, C7) and new agenda items would also be solicited from members and added at the start of a meeting (C11, C10). Further, informants reported that one source of agenda for such scheduled policy table meetings was the weekly closed meetings held between the chair of the DPs and SEST in the MoEST. Civil society is not involved in these meetings hence does not have the privilege of participating in setting the agenda prior to such meetings at the policy table. This has implications on the quality and the relevance of civil society contributions at the policy seat.

4.5.2.2 Constraints to being invited to the policy seat

CSOs plus a few DPs reported some constraints to being 'invited' to be able to sit at the policy table. The first one was simply that of 'not being invited' at all. A couple of reasons were attributed to this failure. Informants reported that this would happen due to poor record keeping at MoEST or due to high staff turnover at MoEST. Consequently, the incumbents charged with the task of inviting members would not have the information pertaining to which CSOs to invite. In other instances, it was due to loss of email addresses of CSOs to be invited or simply because the person charged with the task to invite policy actors forgot to invite them due to pressure of work (C1, M1, C5, and DP3):

> .... the SWAP secretariat would forget to invite the CSOs to the TWG or ESWG meetings. (DP3).

Some respondents further reported that sometimes, CSOs would be left out whenever persons inviting the actors to the policy table had mistakenly bunched them together with CSCQBE (C1). When this happened, it was assumed CSCQBE would represent the left out CSOs. The other constraint was that of being invited at short notice or the invitation coming after the meeting. Informants lamented that letters inviting CSOs and other policy actors do not always arrive in good time. Sometimes for some TWG meetings, invited members would be given very short notice may be as short as just hours to the meeting as reported below:

> .....some of the key documents were sent a day … like on the afternoon for the meeting in the morning, so like for me I had challenges to be able to go through them and conceptualise and so on. …….. because it was a paper on the proposed policy on the reducing repetition rates and then there was the paper on the something on teachers' code of conduct……. umm yeah so those were like the major, like for the teachers' code of conduct we didn't really go into the details 'cause most people hadn't read it and for the other one it was more less going through it ____ and then there was program of works for the ____ yeah, for this, probably for the ____ 'cause we're already ____ which had not been circulated…. (C7)

There was general agreement between DPs and CSOs that occasionally notice for such meetings would be as short as two to three days or even a matter of few hours (C7, DP3, C1, C10, and C5). This resulted in some CSOs failing to attend these meetings (C11). Besides, such short notice also meant that CSOs and other policy actors would not have adequate time to prepare for the meetings because apart from having the agenda, invitation letters would also have quarterly or other reports attached (DP4).

Informants reported that once a CSO had been invited it was left to their institution to decide the person to represent them at the meeting (M2, M1, C5, DP3, DP4, and M7). This resulted in different people from the same institution sitting at the policy table. From the coalition however, one key person always attended (C5, M1, and M3). While this would be good in terms of capacity building among members within an institution, it was however felt by informants that it had its own challenges. Particularly this challenge emanated from the fact that there was very little sharing of proceedings from the policy table among persons from the CSOs that attended the policy meetings with other members from their respective institutions or indeed from the coalition. Informants hence reported lack of continuity of participation in terms of following through on issues discussed at any particular meeting in the past if persons sitting at the table keep changing and do not share with others the proceedings from the meetings. Further, informants also reported that this occurrence raises doubts over true representativeness of the members that attend the policy dialogue from the coalition (C7, M2 and DP6):

> I have my doubts with only one person from CSO representing the CSO, because they don't often meet and do not have a mechanism for sharing whatever goes on here from the TWG…Because you will get to know that they are sharing when you also get comments from other players from the coalition (CSCQBE). But if you don't get those comments, it tells you something…… I think currently there is not much consultation between the members of the coalition and those who come to the TWG. (M2)

4.5.3 How CSOs prepare to participate on the policy table

All informants were asked how CSOs prepared for meetings at the policy table. Several ways were reported by the informants. These included consultation and preparation of written submissions or notes for presentation at TWG or ESWG

4.5.3.1 Consultation

Informants reported that once the agenda and reports for the next policy table discussions had been received, they consulted members from their own institutions or those from the coalition, (CSCQBE, C10). However, CSCQBE reported that holding such consultations with its membership proved problematic due to the pace at which government proceeds with policy issues and lack of resources by the CSCQBE secretariat. This was corroborated by some DPs who reported that since most CSOs were located outside the capital city, Lilongwe, they could not meet frequently to abreast each other of proceedings from the two policy structures, develop unified policy positions among themselves but also to engage DPs due to inadequate resources (DP3).However, informants reported that where meeting was not possible, they solicited information from each other through e-mails (C5). Where any form of consultation failed, some CSOs reported going to the policy table relying solely on what they already knew at the time (C11, C10, and C7).

4.5.3.2 Preparation of written submissions/notes for oral contributions

Occasionally, when required to make submissions at the policy table, some informants reported preparing their submissions based on reports of evaluations of projects that they had implemented (DP5) or research conducted. On the other hand, organisations such as CSCQBE that are not necessarily implementers of projects reported making their submissions at each policy table discussion based on input from membership solicited via emails, internal consultations within the secretariat and from desk reviews (C5).

CSOs that implemented projects but not required to make written submissions would usually simply align lessons learned from their projects to the proposed agenda (C2, C3, and C1). Other CSOs involved in research work for their advocacy programs reported that they drew on their research findings to determine what could be valuable input into the discussions according to the provided agenda (C1, C7). Besides making written submissions, other CSOs like C7, reported that they would go a step further and actually bring persons involved in implementing a project that had some bearing on the agenda to the meeting. These persons would give first-hand information on what was happening on the ground (C7).

Although CSOs reported that they prepared for sitting on the policy table, policy makers in the MoEST plus a few DPs reported some dissatisfaction with the quality of their preparation. Some development partners even doubted if CSOs ever used research to inform their positions on the policy table (DP3). While MoEST policy makers agreed that some CSOs prepared along the agenda provided, they wished such preparation provided possible solutions to the issues raised in the agenda (M1, M4, and M3). One key policy maker wished CSOs consulted their constituencies, were more thorough in their preparation and desisted from looking at issues from an individualistic and narrow-minded way:

> So if objectivity plays a greater role, perhaps that's not the nature of the work of civil societies, perhaps. Objectivity, look at it from all angles and not only from personal individual angle, it's better when there is an issue to be discussed….. this person who is an expert in his own right consults, you know like the CSCQBE we expect that they consult the constituencies, the seventy or so ……. to say, here is an issue what should

> be our stand, but if all other bodies simply say "oh the secretariat dealt with that issue" and they make no opinion, not much progress can be made, that's the way I see it. *(M1)*

Commenting on quality of their contribution on the ESWG, one DP also lamented:

> Ah, I don't think they are very much prepared and that may be a problem in that they come for the sector working group meetings but they have not been attending the technical working group meetings. So they may not be well prepared for what is actually being presented and discussed and that is in my opinion their fault aaah. (*DP6)*

In contrast, other DPs acknowledged that CSOs used research to inform their positions at the policy table. To ensure credibility of submissions to the policy table, some DPs reported that NGOs that implemented demonstrative projects supported both financially and technically by them could only make submissions at the policy table once they (DPs) had adequately reviewed and were satisfied that the submissions were credible for sharing at the policy table (DP5):

> .....they can't just come blablabla and done…… we also look at what should be the evidence in terms of implementing in this issue, …… we review, review and review …we support 100% …doing quality control also. …….So, our role is to empower them to be able to voice reasonably the issue that the government can take on. (DP5)

There was general agreement among DPs and MoEST with respect to lack of capacity among CSOs to make credible contributions at the policy table and that as DPs and MoEST policy makers they had not taken any significant deliberate steps to help the CSOs build their capacity in this regard (M1, M3, M7, M4, DP4, DP6, DP3, and DP2). However they reported that they provided support to CSOs not directed at improving

performance at the policy table but by holding awareness meetings for CSOs to understand how MoEST functions, and engaging CSOs in commissioned research (DP4, DP3, and DP1).Perhaps there is need for an explanation from both MoEST and DPs why this apathy towards the need to improve the credibility of CSOs' contributions at the policy table.

4.5.4. CSOs effectiveness in policy formulation

In response to how they viewed their effectiveness in influencing policy formulation, CSOs reported that they viewed their participation as relatively successful because some policy had been developed due to their influence. Cited examples included girls' re-admission Policy championed by FAWEMA; Direct Support to Schools piloted by LINK; and Primary School Teacher Deployment, Workload and Utilisation policy manual by ACEM. Additionally, some informants among CSOs reported programmes that MoEST has adopted resulting from the work of CSOs such as the implementation of Child Friendly Schools Programme in response to issues of violence in schools (C1, C3, C5), the Re-admission Policy, Community Participation in School Management (C3) and the creation of TILIPO, an organisation by teachers living with HIV and AIDS (C2 and M2) all as examples of CSOs' effectiveness in policy formulation in the sector.

This position of the civil society was corroborated by some MoEST policy makers who reported that:

> .(..) whenever the CSOs carried out credible research that yielded reliable evidence, policy makers would use it in formulating their policies. *(M3)*

The contribution of CSOs implementing projects to policy formulation has been acknowledged by some MoEST policy makers:

> They bring to the policy table useful information and experiences from the grassroots which policy makers find valuable in their deliberations. (*M1, M2, M3 and M7).*

Despite such optimism among the CSOs, CSCQBE expressed caution, citing the immense influence that DPs have on education policy:

> the DPs have a bigger say when it comes to policy formulation, ….in terms of decision because these are policies that most of the times will need resources to operationalise..... whether all the policy that we have really represents our interests is something that can be debated, because for sure they can influence what policies to have. A good example is the Child friendly Schools concept which was heavily promoted by UNICEF and supported by UNICEF. (C5)

In fact DPs also alluded to the same by stating that they do bring to a policy process huge experience from which a country would learn even through demonstrative projects:

> Bringing in a well of experience from many, many countries, you know, something good in different country that would be adopted and adapted, you know,…..for Malawian context, uuh,……. but we are not going to force the government to just, you know, do it, but, we are going to go step by step. (DP5)

However, when asked whether CSOs were effective in influencing policy formulation, both development partners and MoEST agreed that actually CSOs were not as effective in policy formulation as they claimed to be. Apparently, the CSOs are not very active participants during deliberations at the policy table. One DP lamented thus:

> In terms of policy formulation, CSOs are not adequately involved in policy making…. (…) they need to pursue it themselves and should not expect MoEST to wake them up since DPs can only encourage more participation of the CSOs. (*DP3).*

Another DP had this to say:

> CSOs should understand that policy formulation is evidence-based hence should use evidence to back their demands on what government should prioritise based on their understanding of community. Further, CSOs should proactively demonstrate that the issues that they bring at the policy table are national issues coming from implementation of their projects among the grassroots.*(DP2)*

Other development partners reported that CSOs were not effective partners at the policy dialogue partly because they failed to present a united voice during policy discussions at the ESWG or TWG meetings (DP6 and DP4):

> CSOs have their own interests different from that of another CSO….. If there was a way, that as they come to the policy meetings, they have their own [meeting] having already discussed and have a single agenda, maybe they would have a stronger voice than each one of them suggesting separate things. In the end they just make noise and probably no conclusion is reached. (DP4)

Although this response referred to the CSOs' conduct outside the policy table, one senior government policy maker reported that CSOs were not that effective in policymaking:

> ...they are not very approachable……. less constructive and lack that touch of diplomacy which would otherwise have helped them gain mileage in their quest to influencing policy in the education sector. (M1).

4.5.5 Implementation of policies and sector plans by CSOs

Informants were asked the question: how do you participate in the implementation of policy and sector plans? In answer to the question, informants gave a more nuanced response depending on the nature of their work in the sector. First, CSOs that are largely complementary service providers felt they implemented the NESP through provision of

early childhood education, primary, secondary and tertiary education in their respective institutions.

However, the general feeling of the coalition was that it has not been good at implementation of policies because it failed to disseminate policy to the relevant stakeholders who remain ignorant of many policies developed in the sector. For instance, the coalition gave an example of the policy on community participation in school management which it felt many stakeholders do not know about:

> Generally, when it comes to policy implementation my experience has been that as a country we haven't done well. Dissemination has been a problem ….we have so many policies which are kept in the offices and are not shared with relevant stakeholders and very few are known in the communities especially. For instance, community participation in school management…. a strategy which is purely targeting community stakeholders, communities don't even have access and they don't even know what the policy is all about, what the strategy is all about and what we are talking about. (*C5)*

On the other hand, implementation of some specific policies was reported to be going on albeit not on a country level scale. For instance, privately owned institutions claimed that they implemented the girls' readmission policy in their learning institutions better than those of government. These schools were more receptive to girls who had left school due to pregnancy than government and faith based owned schools (C10) who even influenced government to have such girls sent to other schools to continue their education (C1). CSCQBE reported that through NGOs like ACEM, CRECCOM, and FAWEMA with both financial and technical support from UNICEF, they were implementing the readmission policy through a network of over 1,500 mother groups countrywide whose

aim was to encourage girls who had dropped out of school to go back to school. Mother groups comprised largely women who themselves had dropped out of school due to pregnancy and having seen the consequences would not like other girls to experience the same hardship. These mother groups had been trained using the difficulty case methodology, which contrasts the challenges encountered between a girl who has never been pregnant and one who had been pregnant to help girls enrol and stay in school. The mother groups act as advisory bodies and provide community sensitisation, counselling and other support to the readmitted girls, their parents, and school teachers on how to handle and provide support to them.

4.5.6 Monitoring and evaluation of policies by CSOs

The study also wanted to know how CSOs participated in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of education policies including those that the CSOs may have contributed to their development. The results from the study indicated that CSOs were weak in terms of monitoring and evaluation of individual policies with most expressing that their M&E frameworks did not target specific policies they may have contributed to their development. Instead, M&E of policies was mainstreamed in respective projects or programmes that they implemented. For instance, CSOs cited monitoring of the girls' readmission policy which they reported was monitored through projects like mother groups under the auspices of UNICEF. Besides, although it is done on a one-off basis, the coalition sometimes conducts research, to determine how a particular policy was performing. For instance, the coalition conducted a national survey called Education Delivery Secondary School Survey (EDSSS) to determine the extent the Community

stakeholders get satisfied with the Education Services. This survey particularly targeted the Community Participation School Management Strategy. This survey helped to identify some of the gaps which are there, in terms of policy implementation, policy formulation, issues of budgeting and so forth, and through that they were able to monitor the extent to which these policies were being implemented. The most outstanding M&E activity carried by the coalition secretariat, funded by DfiD on behalf of the CSOs was the annual budget monitoring exercise. For instance according to the CSOs, they see budget monitoring exercise as having been very critical to influencing if not policy per se but also policy direction. CSOs reported thus:

> Budget analysis is very, very important in shaping objective debate on issues among legislators especially Parliamentary Committee on Education during parliamentary budget sessions …..it has also been used to further engage Development Partners to review their financing to the sector … it has also influenced Government to spend on infrastructure ….. it has influenced MoEST to establish the Project Management Unit to oversee infrastructure development and to fast track progress for instance of construction of school blocks…. It has also influenced government to focus on sanitary facilities in primary schools….. and it has influenced DPs to increase resource allocation towards sanitary facilities.(C5)

Education budget monitoring exercise is an annual exercise carried out by the coalition (CSCQBE) secretariat. It is one of the evidence of the involvement of CSOs in the policy implementation process, monitoring and evaluation. This work on budget tracking has reportedly resulted in government increasing its budgetary allocation to education to about 23% (C3, C5 and DP6). Acknowledging the effort of the coalition in this regard, some DPs reported that CSCQBE campaigned relentlessly in the past three to four years to have budgetary allocation to education increased (DP1 and DP6).

Generally policy implementation would be monitored through technical working group meetings where:

> we discuss whether we have achieved something,.(…) we write quarterly reports, monthly reports and we discuss them during the meetings ……..and you are quizzed why you haven't done this and that, I think that is the best monitoring tool. (M3).

4.6 Challenges faced by CSOs while participating in policy process

The fourth research question was: What are the challenges that civil society organisations encounter as they participate in education policy process? In answer to this question, informants reported a number of challenges encountered in the course of participating in the policy process.

4.6.1 Animosity and mistrust among policy actors

Animosity and mistrust among policy actors was reported as a big challenge that CSOs faced in the policy process. A number of actors reported that this was the case especially between CSOs and government (DP1, C5, C1, C10, M3, and M2).One MoEST director reported that:

> There are two groups policy makers fear to interact with regularly and these are the civil society and the media. (*M3)*

There was almost a universal agreement among government and DPs that the CSOs were confrontational when it came to dialoguing with government at the policy table or through the media (M7, M3, DP6, M2, DP4, DP3, C2, M1 and M4):

> CSOs do not engage in technical discussions with a spirit of oneness or togetherness with other actors intent on improving the education sector instead they tend to be "accusatory" in their stance to government. (DP6).

Policy makers from government side complained that generally CSOs criticised government without offering any solutions. MoEST policy makers complained that CSOs always reported on failures of the ministry and ignored completely any successes registered and attributed this fact to the poor relations between ministry and CSOs (M7). It was further reported by MoEST policy makers that CSOs usually shunned negotiating and dialoguing with the government but instead rushed to media houses before getting proper information (DP4, M2, M7, M1, M4 and M3) and just said things in a negative manner (M6):

> They will wait for a certain meeting that we will organize and then they find a chance to bite you with criticisms….. they are very good at criticizing rather than supporting you. (M3)

Further, it was reported that CSOs would still maintain their confrontational stance around an issue even after they have had an audience with relevant MoEST policy makers a thing which irked ministry policy makers (M2).However, the CSOs explained that they did this in the interest of accountability to the people and in their capacity as watchdogs. It was reported however that those CSOs which specialized only in advocacy tended to be more critical of government than CSOs which were both implementers and doing some advocacy work (M2). Not every member of the CSOs however approved of the all out confrontational approach (C2, C11 and C3) preferring a more reconciliatory approach which they reported bore more dividends than the confrontational one. It was also reported that while CSOs are still confrontational, they have toned down a bit as one key policy maker in the ministry reported:

> Unlike in the past when they would go flat out bash- bash- bash without being constructive.(M2)

Perhaps as a consequence of the animosity and mistrust between them CSOs reported that MoEST was not listening to them because it would basically go ahead with policies which may not be in the interest of the country. The government however says that it considers many things before accepting calls from CSOs but informants reported that the government does this in order to get donor money and deliberately ignore all advice to the contrary from stakeholders using its position of power and influence(C1 and C2).For instance government refuses to adopt the compulsory primary education policy despite many calls from CSOs citing lack of resources to implement such a policy (M2). While such calls for introduction of compulsory primary education are good, however, experience from free primary education shows that implementation may prove problematic. In fact government claims that it listens to CSOs for instance that it has increased its budgetary allocation to 23% due to many calls made by CSOs to government through various forums such as EFA Global week of Action, and ESWG (M2):

> Financing of education now gets a lion's share of the budget…..this year 23% as a result of a lot of advocacy from CSOs and other players on the ground. (*M2)*

However, it may not be apparent whether government raised its budgetary allocation to education as a result of calls by CSOs because government was at the time also considering doing the same in line with SWAP FTI funding as part of the EFA goals:

> Last time the CSOs were talking about increasing the percentage of financing the education sector, to 20%.Government was also working towards the same goal as part of education SWAP FTI funding towards EFA goals. (M2)

CSOs and some DPs also felt that it was not right that the DPs should co-chair ESWG meetings as this was indicative of the huge influence DPs have on policy formulation in Malawi due to the huge financial resources they commit towards implementation of the policies. The coalition also felt that it brought to the fore the question of whether the policies developed are really home-grown policies.

4.6.2 Representation of CSOs in sectoral policy structures

Another challenge reported by CSOs, development partners and government policy actors was lack of representativeness of the CSOs that sit at the policy table that take decisions on adoption the policy. These actors felt that they did not truly represent their constituencies (DP3, C5 and DP4). It was felt that since the official seat is given to only one or two CSOs actors, it is not possible for the CSOs who sit at the policy table to truly represent the rest. One development partner put it this way:

> The CSOs sitting on the TWG and ESWG may not be truly representative of all the CSOs since they are so many and into different fields which may not be captured and this may contribute to their low quality of participation at the policy table (DP3).

This challenge led to reduced representativeness of the CSOs' "voice" during ESWG meetings (C5, DP3, DP4, DP1 and C11) exacerbated by further reports that CSCQBE which is the official CSOs body mandated to sit at the policy table did not share with its

membership proceedings of the deliberations such that its membership was not kept informed of outcomes of such meetings (C11, C7and M2):

> CSCQBE needs to be reorganised in terms of focus: how it gets informed on what the members are doing and how that information fits into policy, and how whatever is discussed in the TWG goes back to the members……that at the moment, is not working". (*C7)*

This was compounded by some NGOs which were into advocacy and not implementing any projects in the sector. Such NGOs that did not even belong to the coalition and actually did not even have any constituency at all yet they sit at the policy table (C5):

> I will give an example of (.....*name withheld*….)it's an organisation that used to have structures, initially when it was established, currently it doesn't have these structures (…) but it is still operational. It will still represent and participate and claim that it have constituency but we know that it doesn't have (…), so if (.....*name withheld*...)) speaks it speaks for who? Is it an individual on behalf of the communities or what? (*C5).*

4.6.3 Funding mechanism within SWAP

One CSOs actor reported that lack of funding presented a formidable obstacle to their relevance during such meetings which unfortunately were infested with mistrust and animosity:

> ...lack of human capacity and financial resources to carry out good research to generate credible evidence that government can accept is a big problem. (C2)

Consequently, according to C2, CSOs relied heavily on crude and raw information obtained from their widespread presence at grassroots and how widespread the issue was across the country to give credence to their opinions during policy dialogue. According to some development partners, lack of funds had been compounded further by pool funding mechanism within the SWAP (DP2). With this mechanism, CSOs would be funded either

from the pool funds or project funds. Project funds were earmarked for projects within the programme of works [PoW] in the sector but financed by a development partner. The statement below was the funding mechanism as reported by a key MoEST policy maker:

> The working mechanism is: we [MoEST] agree on what are called the Programme of Works that are going to work on. We [MoEST] also determine which works will be financed from the pool of finances and from projects resources. We have so many activities being implemented on the ground that we agreed as government to do through NGOs. So as government we would advertise and those NGOs who are credible will bid and winners will provide the service. Let the best guy do the job on merit. So some people say that '*mukutimana ma* resources' (you are denying us resources) (M2).

The challenge with the mechanism however as reported by CSOs, was how CSOs would be identified and authorised to access funds. CSOs were of the view that the process would not be free and fair as government would favour some CSOs and prevent others from accessing the funds through its bidding process. And so CSOs questioned how MoEST would ensure that within SWAP, CSOs would benefit from the resources that would fall into this basket (M2).

> No! You know it's the same problems that we're grappling with education SWAp, because all these donors are pooling together their funding which means that the civil society is already losing out. The expectation is that the civil society will benefit from the pool funding, how realistic are we? Would government really give funding to its critic? (C5)

These fears of CSOs were also concurred by some development partner who argued that for the process to work out effectively there was need for reforms in the sector with respect to dealing with the NGOs with regard to how they work and get their funding because CSOs did not usually bid for funding (DP3).

> For CSOs the pool funding mechanism, whereby government would subcontract an NGO to do some works on the PoW may not work very well because CSOs may be at the mercy of the government which CSOs claim may not be as objective as DPs in the way it awards the contracts. (DP3)

4.7 Chapter summary

The policy formulation structures identified in this study are classified into sectoral SWAp structures (ESWG, TWG and STFs)and ministry management structures (senior management and directorate management). The results show that CSOs are represented at each level of the SWAp structures but are absent from two of the eight TWGs: management and governance, and infrastructure TWGs. However the study shows that CSOs are given the space they need to engage with government in their effort to influence policy in the sector.

Policy making takes two different pathways: thus through sectoral structures or exclusively through ministry management structures. CSOs are institutionally *included* in the policy making process when sector structures [e.g. ESWG, TWG and STFs] are chosen for purposes of policy making. However, CSOs are institutionally *excluded* if the policy making pathway is one that exclusively involves ministry management structures. Policy making process in education sector is spearheaded by respective directorates within the ministry under the leadership of the SEST.

The study has shown that civil society is involved in policymaking through generation of policy issues, generating evidence to support policy change, development of policy

briefs, developing policy drafts and doing advocacy work on specific policy. However, despite their involvement in the policy process, according to Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, it can be concluded that CSOs are not fully participating in policy making process. Two reasons account for this discrepancy. First, often where they have been involved in generating evidence to inform policy, it has been under the auspices of a development partner where CSOs have not had a voice in the process. Second, despite involvement in other preliminary stages, the CSOs are not part of the policy structures where policy decisions are made. According to Arnstein's ladder of participation, participation occurs when stakeholders *influence* policy.

Results also showed that policy actors have differing views and perspectives towards CSOs vis-à-vis participation on policy table and process as a whole. While CSOs feel they have been successful in influencing policy in the sector, for instance in the development of policies such as girls' readmission policy, direct support to schools, and hardship allowance for rural teachers, ministry officials and DPs had an opposite opinion. The study has shown that the influence of CSOs in the sector is severely curtailed by a number of challenges. These challenges include animosity and mistrust between them and MoEST, inadequate use of independent research to inform their policy positions, inadequate collaboration amongst CSOs, lack of capacity, and the funding mechanism within SWAp. Policy actors especially among ministry policy actors and DPs were of the view that CSOs need to become less confrontational and develop good working relations with government for them to genuinely *participate* in the policy process otherwise their influence in the sector would continue to be marginally effectual.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the key findings on representation of CSOs in the existing policy structures and their participation in the policy process with a view of understanding their role as "partners" and stakeholders (citizen) representing the voiceless on the policy table using Arnstein's ladder of participation. It also discusses CSOs and other policy actors' views and perception in relation to their participation in policy process and the challenges CSOs face during their involvement in the education policy process. Finally the chapter presents the conclusions, implications derived from the findings and recommendations.

5.1 Representation of civil society in policy structures of MoEST

The overall purpose of the study was to determine how CSOs in Malawi participate in education policy process (policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). The research posited a number of questions. Firstly, the research sought to find out how the civil society is represented in the policy structures of the MoEST. According to the findings of the study, civil society organisations are represented only in the SWAp policy structures. One CSO informant indicated that the CSCQBE sits in the ESWG but that 'in all these structures[SWAp structures] from the technical working

group to the sector working group, there is high participation of civil society organisations.' According to the findings of the study CSOs are represented at each level of sector policy structure, which are both institutionalised and regularised (Government of Malawi, 2008). This situation is a big departure from what was the case as reported by Miller-Grandvaux, et al. (2002) where CSOs' participation in policy process was on an ad hoc basis using various consultative forums. The creation of SWAp structures and the involvement of CSOs in SWAp is an expansion of the interface between government policy actors and non-state actors (CSOs and the private sector) moving from a mechanism of ad hoc consultative forums to one of institutionalised and regularised structures. However, inclusion of CSOs in SWAp structures appears to be largely in response to two urgent needs. First the need to fulfil conditions imposed by donors and development partners reflected in Paris Declaration (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008) as quoted in (Government of Malawi, 2008) but also secondly the desire by government to use SWAp as a way to facilitate actualisation of the MGDS (Government of Malawi, 2008).

The placement of CSOs in SWAp policy structures means that in one sense there is participation of CSOs in the policy process. On the other hand, according to Arnstein (1969), placement of CSOs in the SWAP structures is not participation but merely tokenism. These research findings confirm the assertion by Bowen (2008, p.66) that 'citizen participation activities typically take place through two types of structures: citizen-initiated groups and government-initiated advisory or policy-setting bodies'. Therefore since CSOs are represented in the SWAP structures, it can be inferred that

there is participation of CSOs in the policy process. Further, the placement of CSOs in SWAp structures fulfils the Dakar (2000) declaration of treating CSOs as *partners* [italics for emphasis] at the policy table. However, the current practice is inconsistent with assertions by Arnstein (1969) who has argued that participation is not just *partners* sitting in policy structures. Rather participation is said to occur where stakeholders as *partners* have the capacity to influence policy and not just being part of the process. According to Arnstein (1969), this is regardless of whether the spaces used are self- created by the citizens or created by government. The findings of the study are that the SWAp structures are functionally effectively operating in an advisory capacity to government. This means that these structures do not have power to *ensure* [italics for emphasis] that their 'recommendations' to senior management of the ministry are adopted and eventually inform policy. Therefore according to Arnstein (1969) participation of CSOs in these structures is merely *tokenism*.

The second key finding with respect to CSOs' representation in policy structures is that CSOs are not treated as equal *partners* to MoEST policy actors and the DPs with respect to access to and representation on the policy table. For instance, CSOs are not in control of both ensuring that they 'get to the policy table' and to 'what policy table'. They are picked and dropped at will by the inviting agency and are therefore effectively powerless in ensuring their participation in these policy structures. Thus the coalition membership is ignorant of the rules and procedures governing their selection to the policy table although the coalition secretariat and ministry are aware of these rules and procedures. In this

regard, the coalition secretariat has chosen to side with government and not share this information with the CSOs interviewed in this study.

Similarly, the research found that CSOs were excluded from the policy spaces/structures where issues of power, influence, management and control and decision making regarding policy and huge sums of money form the core business. Such SWAp structures include TWC; Management and Governance TWG and TWG for Infrastructure. However, this is not surprising since Government policy makers view public policy as the purview of only the public sector actors and donors that are likely to finance implementation of the policies once they are effected. Hoppers (2009, p.258) asserted that what is very decisive in determining the course a policy takes during policy making is actually 'where critical decisions regarding the anchoring of the policy within the wider framework of education are made' and not necessarily having influence over the policy where policy proposals are being made. Thus in the framework of SWAp, CSOs are located where policy is crafted technically in this case from STF to ESWG, but kept away from structures where policy decisions are made which include management structures in the ministry**. S**ince SWAp structures effectively serve in advisory capacity to government, what can be seen is that the positioning of CSOs in the SWAP structures is merely *placation*, where CSOs are given some limited influence over policy. This occurs when occasionally ministry has approved a policy that has incorporated '*as is'* the technical aspects of a policy recommended by the ESWG. Otherwise, according to the ladder of participation, their function in these structures is below that of 'partner' and

consequently their involvement in the policy process cannot be called ‘participation’ per se but rather ‘tokenism’.

Literature shows that representation of CSOs in education sector policy structures is not unique to Malawi but has also been reported in other countries albeit in varying degrees and formats (Mundy et al.,2008; Cherry, 2007; Haggerty 2007).TENMET in Tanzania is given a seat at national level (Haggerty,2007). However, the general trend is that governments prefer to locate civil society away from the national policy seats. For instance in Burkina Faso CSOs are located at decentralised regional level (Mundy et al., 2008). In Mali according to the education Plan for Mali (PRODEC) CSOs are allowed seats not even at regional level but at the lowest decentralised structure which is the school level through the school management committees (CGS) Cherry (2007). In contrast to the above, Kenya CSOs actually do not have seats on national, regional nor school level structures. However, the CSOs in Kenya still engage in policy dialogue with government and donors through various organs or avenues. For instance they use annual Education Stakeholders Forum, National Advisory Council (to advise the minister of education on a needs-based basis) and Kenya Education Sector Plan Steering Committee. These engagements however are less formalised.

The third key finding was that CSOs in this study lacked congruence in understanding of what constitutes the ‘policy structures’ and their ToRs in the sector. For instance, many of the respondents did not identify the structures unequivocally, with varying perceptions of what constituted the policy structures as reflected in Table 4.1**.** This lack of

congruence could be due to the fact that at the time of the study, the SWAp structures in education had not yet become fully functional. However, most of the informants from the ministry were very senior officers at both directorate and above and should have been very clear of what constituted policy structures. Yet the variability of responses as evidenced by responses can be symptomatic of informants not being well informed of existing policy structures and the policy making process in the sector. Lack of adequate knowledge of policy space limits how much policy actors can exploit the opportunities to influence policy as they take their place within those spaces.

Further, CSOs did not have a common understanding particularly on whether ESWG especially or indeed even the TWGs had power just like senior management structures to make policy for the sector. This confusion was evident even among DPs though to a lesser degree. For instance, while some DPs felt that ESWG were policy structures vested with the authority to make policy binding on government other DPs reported that these structures were only advisory in nature. This confusion is probably due to the fact that SWAp structures are seen as functionally parallel to the management structures of the ministry. This confirms Eberlei (2001) assertion that when spaces for policy dialogue between government, DPs and civil society are parallel to those of government, then they cease to be of any significant effect on shaping and influencing education policy. The fact that in one sense recommendations from ESWG are 'binding' on government and shapes policy yet in another sense the same are not binding on government may contribute to this lack of congruence. For Malawi, the confusion is exacerbated by the simple fact that the ESWG is chaired by both the same top most manager in the sector, the SEST and a

DP as vice chair. Since stakeholders seem to neither know nor understand the boundaries of their participation, the representation of CSOs is likely not fully institutionalised. Therefore CSOs come to such policy table as a matter of routine. Commenting on similar confusion among CSOs regarding policy structures in Mali, Cherry (2007) asserted that such uncertainty critically undermines the quality of participation in the policy dialogue in the sector.

5.2 Involvement of civil society organisations in education national policy making process

The second research question sought to find out how civil society organisations are involved in education policy making process. According to the findings of this study the involvement of civil society organisations in policy making process is largely *tokenism* and only partially participation. Firstly, it is largely *tokenism* because what constitutes the nature of CSOs' involvement in policy making process is largely *consultations* and simply *information sharing*. According to Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, these forms of involvement are tokenism. This is principally because, as stakeholders CSOs do not have the power to ensure that their input (through information sharing and consultations) is reflected in policy. It is essential that consultations need not just be for purposes of *placation*, or even more so just for 'power holders' to 'hear their (stakeholders) side', on the contrary consultations must reflect a genuine desire of 'power holders' to incorporate views from stakeholders in this case CSOs. The complaints among CSOs that generally ministry was not listening to them may be indicative that their views were not necessarily being reflected in education policy. These findings

confirm Cheru's, 2006, assertion that governments have tended to restrict their engagement with CSOs to the level of consultation and not moved on to joint decision-making. According to him governments do this because they are not obliged to incorporate received input into policy it intends to make however constructive such input may be. It is for this reason that consultations are taken as *tokenism* and considered effectively non-effectual in influencing policy according to Arnstein (1969).

Secondly, their involvement in policy making can be characterised as partial *participation* of CSOs. This occurs when occasionally CSOs have influenced policy making through shared decision-making or joint decision-making. This has happened when policy recommendations generated from demonstrative interventions have eventually informed ensuing policy. For instance the Direct Support to Schools Policy was informed by such recommendations vetted as technically feasible by the ESWG. Whenever CSOs co-jointly make policy decision with government, then the cardinal tenet that defines participation according to Arnstein (1969) is fulfilled. This contradicts Eberlei, 2006who asserted that "a 'joint-decision –making' between a government and civil society actors is –constitutionally speaking –not possible"(as cited in Führmann 2006, p. 10).He contends that civil society do not have the powers which are legally conferred on elected officers such as parliamentarians and sitting government that gives them the right and powers to make policies. However in this case, adopted policy recommendations, which were deemed technically feasible by ESWG, in which CSOs are party, were binding on ministry and went on to be reflected in the Direct Support to Schools Policy. This is what Arnstein (1969) deems participation and it agrees with the

essence of involving CSOs as partners at the policy table as per the spirit of the Dakar (2000) conference. The caveat here however is that government can still reject technically sound policy proposals as recommendations due to political reasons which are overriding.

A couple of reasons may account for this limitation of CSOs to influence policy. First, contrary to the institutionalisation guidelines, the ESWG functions primarily in an advisory capacity to the Ministry. Therefore, it can only recommend 'policy' to the Ministry. CSOs in ESWG are therefore not in an 'authoritative' position with full powers to negotiate and jointly reach decisions with government. This position seems to concur with that of Eberlei(2006) that joint decision making with government as Arnstein (1969) advocates for is technically not feasible because it is only an elected government that is mandated to make policy. The constitution of Malawi confers this prerogative on executive arm of Government. It is therefore most unlikely that ministry officials would willingly share this right or privilege with CSOs hence the relegation of ESWG to that of advisory capacity and effectively limiting CSOs to the position of the 'consulted'. The process of taking a decision on policy is therefore left in the hands of government.

Secondly, CSOs are institutionally not members of the structures (or stages) where policy decisions are taken by ministry. Thus as the policy making process continues past the ESWG, CSOs get 'institutionally excluded' from the subsequent stages**.** Thus since the civil society organisations do not have the power to influence the adoption of suggested policy, their involvement is restricted to merely tokenism.

Thirdly, civil society organisations involvement in demonstrative projects or research with the express purpose of generating evidence to inform policy is again largely placation. This is because CSOs seem not to have the 'voice' even in the evidence they generate:

> We [DPs] provide evidence that goes into the draft policy; as advisors we make sure that all the issues are captured in the policy statement such that in the drafting stage we facilitate it; we don't write but we read the draft each time they [CSOs implementing donor funded intervention] write because we are financing the project.*(DP5)*

Thus evidence generated by the civil society organisations which are implementing the demonstrative project or carrying out the research may not be the authentic voice of the 'constituencies' targeted by the policy since often such evidence is for purposes of 'domesticating' imported policy. Miller-Grandvaux, et al. (2002) asserted that one way development partners influence policy is through implementation of projects in the sector which they use expressly as evidence generators to convince government of the efficacy of the envisaged policy.

Walker (2001) cautions that the process of generating such requisite evidence can be flawed. 'The evidence-based policy and practice approach is only as good as the quality of the underpinning evidence. The effectiveness of this approach is also based on the integrity of the processes of: sourcing the evidence, interpreting the information and knowledge utilization and the capacity to understand and adopt the evidence, evaluate and adapt it, and apply and act on it'(Bertin, n.d. p. 2). Masch (2003) as quoted by Bertin (n.d.)contends that for advocates and lobbyists 'Their goal is not the open-minded

promotion of knowledge or truth. Their goal is to successfully secure fixed, predetermined outcomes'. So while the CSOs may be involved in the whole process, the evidence generated may neither necessarily reflect their 'voice' as CSOs nor that of the constituencies they purport to represent. According to AGCSE (2007a, 2007b) cited in Mundyet al.(2008), participation of CSOs that genuinely represent their constituencies results in having more democratic outcomes, making educational services more attractive and enabling citizens especially the less privileged and marginalised to make educational claims. Therefore, if such evidence does not inform ensuing policy, it can be safely concluded according to Arnstein (1969) that CSOs have not 'influenced' policy making and their involvement is just placation and not participation. Their contribution in 'domesticating' the policy is largely useful in policy implementation as evidenced by the perception of both DPs and ministry policy actors that CSOs do not influence policy making in the sector at all but rather are good implementers of policy.

Other studies have shown that CSOs have similarly been involved in policy process largely through consultations but also demonstrative projects, research agenda setting and policy drafting. The experience of CSOs to influence policy through consultations is nuanced. Some have succeeded while others have failed. For instance while Schnuttgen and Khan, 2004 asserted that consultations were largely ineffectual in influencing policy despite CSOs having requisite expertise, Haggerty (2007) found contrary results. The difference could be that TEN/MET did not just have the expertise but that it had also acquired the necessary trust and respect among ministry policy actors. Developing trust and respect among government policy actors is a very important ingredient if CSOs are to

exert any influence on policy in the sector at all. CSOs which did not enjoy the confidence of and acceptance by ministry policy actors failed to influence policy through consultations (Cherry, 2007). Further, TEN/MET performance not only contradicts Schnuttgen and Khan (2004) but also reflects a positive advancement in the capacity of CSOs to influence policy in education sector. Contrary to the experience of Schnuttgen and Khan (2004), TEN/MET not only participated in drafting education policy document but it had also consequently ensured that it had captured the CSOs' role of policy, research and the contentious accountability roles into the national education plan (Mundy et al., 2008).

The study has established that CSOs engage in policy making occasionally through generating research–based evidence which may eventually inform policy. It has also been established that CSOs are largely involved in policy making through consultations in STFs, TWGs and ESWG. So according to Brinkerhoff and Crosby's (2002) criteria, CSOs' involvement in policy making in Malawi is worth calling participation. However what is true is that even when CSOs' policy recommendations have been adopted and gone to inform policy, CSOs do not have the power to 'ensure' that their input into policy is 'adopted'. In other words, CSOs do not have the power to ensure that their policy recommendations once adopted by ESWG must also be adopted by ministry. That power does not belong to them, it subsists in government. So their participation in policy making up to this level is tokenism.

5.3 Views and perspectives of the civil society organisations about their participation in education policy process

The study also sought to find out the views of CSOs about their participation in the policy process: policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The study found that the perceptions were varied.

5.3.1 Participation in policy formulation

Civil society organisations perceived their involvement in policy making as *participation*. According to the CSOs, despite meeting with some challenges they had nonetheless succeeded to influence some policies in the sector for instance the girls' re-admission policy and the Direct Support to Schools. However, they also felt that lack of transparency about the rules and procedures governing their selection to the policy table inevitably reduced their involvement to *tokenism*. Not knowing well in advance if they would be invited for policy dialogue, and receiving invitations letters late when invited meant also accessing the agenda and other relevant information late. Confirming this scenario one CSOs informant said that 'some of the key documents were sent a day … like on the afternoon for the meeting in the morning, so like for me I had challenges to be able to go through them and conceptualise and so on. …….. because it was a paper on the proposed policy on the reducing repetition rates and then there was the paper on the something on teachers' code of conduct……. umm'. Additionally, CSOs also felt that

consequently they could not consult their constituencies' adequately in preparation for such policy dialogue and led to lack of having one voice at the policy table.

Thus CSOs felt that since they would not adequately prepare for policy dialogue, they were prevented from engaging in meaningful policy dialogue because their contributions were not credible. Inevitably their contributions could not inform policy for lack of credibility. One DP reported that 'Ah, I don't think they are very much prepared and that may be a problem in that they come for the sector working group meetings but they have not been attending the technical working group meetings. So they may not be well prepared for what is actually being presented and discussed and that is in my opinion their fault aaah'. Thus DPs and ministry policy actors concurred that effectively, CSOs were not effective in influencing policy making in the sector. This means that the input of CSOs into the policy making process does not generally influence policy. DPs and ministry policy actors know where the main influence and power to influence policy subsists hence their contrary perception to that of CSOs view of success in influencing policy making. However, their marginal success in influencing policy has been acknowledged by both the DPs and ministry policy actors as reflected by the results.

However, this experience is not peculiar to Malawi. Similar design process constraints with respect to how CSOs access the policy table were reported by (Gaynor, 2008a; Haggerty, 2007; Lexow, 2003; Mundy et al., 2008). This challenge is common among SWAps (Lexow, 2003) such that while political space for participation of CSOs in the policy process may have opened up, governments are not really keen on sharing the

policy table with CSOs particularly at national level (Manion, 2007). Perhaps because involvement of CSOs as partners at the policy table is an imposition by donors, their role(CSOs) as providers of research-based evidence is not yet sufficient to buy them unfettered access.

These design process problems reveal that participation of CSOs at the policy table is not genuine. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) asserted that genuine participation entails shared decision making among stakeholders on who participates. Further, since governments authoritatively pick and drop CSOs that sit at the policy table on the basis of how the chosen CSOs is perceived to enhance MoEST's cause, CSOs' participation is therefore 'extractive' hence is pseudo-participation (Rose,2003). Gaynor, (2008) also reported governments' lack of openness or clarity on criteria used for selecting CSOs to attend policy table meetings. This affected CSOs' frankness during deliberations for fear of being dropped or not invited to subsequent meetings (Gaynor, 2008). Since according to Arnstein,(1969) 'participation' meant stakeholders having capacity to influence decisions regarding their involvement, results of this study suggest that CSOs are not 'participating' in the process leading to their access to the policy table. Finally, the results further suggest that participation of CSOs in the policy process though institutionalised is not established. This is because according to Eberlei (2001), all parties to a policy process should have access to information that governs the participation process and this study revealed that such was not the case.

Cherry (2007) asserted that the quality of participation at the policy table by a coordinating body that does not consult its membership adequately is undermined. It was noted that CSOs attending subsequent ESWG are not kept abreast of proceedings and 'ethos' of ESWG deliberations. This was revealed by the 'disconnect' of substance in contributions being offered at policy table by some CSOs from the substance of policy dialogue during some sittings of the ESWG. Thus information sharing among all stakeholders to the policy dialogue is critical to having a meaningful dialogue. Results of this study have shown that this is a big problem and has often dogged CSOs' participation at the policy table. This may imply that CSOs' presence at the policy table is merely placation by: 1) satisfying CSOs' quest to be part of the policy process at national level, 2) for political expediency where ministry wants to fulfil the requirement of involving civil society and other stakeholders in the SWAp and 3) for government to fulfil the Dakar declarations with regard to engaging CSOs as partners in policy making. According to Arnstein's ladder of participation, such involvement is not participation but rather mere tokenism since CSOs are reduced to merely listeners.

CSOs perceived that another factor that affected their participation was lack of appropriate capacity among CSOs. Land & Hauck (2003) reported that capacity gap among CSOs resulted from the demands placed on CSOs by the new SWAps. According to them involvement of CSOs within SWAps at national level requires certain skills, aptitudes which need to be capacity built. However, in Malawi despite noting the capacity gap among CSOs in policy analysis and carrying out independent research to

inform their position, both MoEST and DPs did not seriously undertake adequate and deliberate steps to address this problem. There is however some ad hoc effort being made by ministry or DPs through occasional commissioned research given to CSOs to capacity build them in policy analysis and development. However, by not addressing this capacity gap among CSOs as partners in ESWG is contrary to the SWAp guidelines which provide for the need to capacity build stakeholders to the level that makes them more meaningful partners at the policy table. It is possible that the ministry has not taken the responsibility to capacity build the CSO because of the animosity and mistrust existing between it and CSOs. On the other hand, the DPs have not embraced CSO capacity building because they do not view this as their obligation. Considering the good relationships between DPs and the CSOs, one would assume that DPs would aim to redress this capacity gap among CSOs and improve the quality of their participation.

5.3.2 Participation in policy implementation

Generally the view of CSOs in the study was that of despondency. One key CSOs informant reflected this position thus:' generally, when it comes to policy implementation my experience has been that as a country we haven't done well. Dissemination has been a problem ….we have so many policies which are kept in the offices and are not shared with relevant stakeholders and very few are known in the communities especially'. CSOs have failed to facilitate successful implementation of policies because due to resource constraints, they have not as actively participated in policy formulation, and initial policy dissemination as in its implementation. Hence, as the same CSO lamented regarding lack

of dissemination: '(…)...communities don’t even have access and they don’t even know what the policy is all about, what the strategy is all about and what we are talking about'. Thus participation of civil society organisations in policy implementation is again tokenism.

According to Brinkerhoff and Cosby (2002), policy dissemination is critical to successful policy implementation. Further, by not implementing policy, the participation of CSOs is tokenistic precisely because they fail to change or modify policy due to inadequate appropriation of policy. Moulton et al., 2001 (as cited by Cherry , 2007) found that policy formulation continued during policy implementation since it is very rare that policy as designed during formulation is executed ‘as is’ during implementation. Rather ‘many key actors in a reform-ministry staff, teachers, parents and funding agencies-tended to express their priorities during the implementation rather than policy-formation phase of a reform’ Moulton (2001,p. 5 as quoted by Cherry, 2007).

Further, CSOs in the study seemed not to understand that their monthly TWGs and quarterly ESWG meetings provided them policy spaces where they could participate in policy implementation. Unlike in Mali, Malawi has regularised review of policy implementation through reviews of reports by the directors in TWGs and ESWG on the progress of Programme of Works, where CSOs are fully represented. This means that CSOs in Malawi are accorded a rare opportunity to participate in implementation of policy in the sector and by consequence in formulation of policy. Yet generally, most

policy actors even CSOs in the study did not see their involvement in these policy structures as providing them 'regular, influential fora for civil society and government to discuss broader education sector directions" Cherry (2007, p. 134). This means that CSOs in Malawi are accorded rare opportunity to participate in implementation of policy in the sector and by consequence in formulation of policy.

The presence of CSOs in TWGs and ESWG policy structures that are critical in policy formulation process, presents a rare opportunity for them to not only improve policies but also avail to policy dialogue their 'personal experiences' of policy outworking at grassroots level to counterbalance reports given by directors. However, this study has shown that CSOs who sit at these policy structures are not always representative of the coalition membership, hence their input in the process is not necessarily representative of their constituencies. Consequently they may have little effect in terms of reflecting the needs of those targeted by the policies. In addition, final decisions on policy reside outside these sector policy structures. What this points to is that it is not having CSOs in the same policy structure that is of substance, rather what power they wield to decide or influence final policy that is critical or essential. According to the findings of this study such power is not availed to CSOs or the coalition. This scenario of powerlessness by CSOs is aptly described by the questions asked by Cherry, (2007, p. 140) who asked 'what kind of spaces would permit civil society to exercise influence during policy implementation; how are the key decisions really made, and how is the real power exercised?' Politics is of essence here and therefore how CSOs manage such political

power is critical to how much leverage they have to influence policy during review of policy implementation (Tandon, 2003 in Cherry, 2007).

5.3.3 Participation in policy monitoring and evaluation

Just like their experience in policy formation, implementation, civil society organisations participation in monitoring and evaluation of education policy is tokenistic. While M&E does not necessarily inform policy making in the sector, development partners (DP1 and DP6) have acknowledged civil society (C3 and C5) claims that budget tracking by the coalition secretariat has influenced an increase in budgetary allocation to education: 'Financing of education now gets a lion's share of the budget…..this year 23% as a result of a lot of advocacy from CSOs and other players on the ground'. However, their efficacy to continue influencing education policy through sustained advocacy based on budget tracking is not guaranteed due to doubts over the authenticity of figures used and how the analysis is done by both DPs and MoEST policy actors. This development is worrisome considering that CSOs cannot achieve any measure of influence over education policy unless development partners and especially ministry have a buy in their work. However, just like in Tanzania (Haggerty, 2007) CSOs in Malawi are usually denied timely access to credible fiscal information by ministry officials because it is considered confidential material.

The officials are wary to release such information that can potentially be used against them by the CSOs. What this means is that CSOs need to balance their watchdog role and their 'partnership' role very carefully otherwise what the study sees happening is ministry officials denying them access to credible information for use in their M&E exercise and in turn ministry officials turning around and say since the data is questionable, their conclusions and lessons learnt cannot inform policy. The ministry would thus effectively keep CSOs in a weakened position and reduce their annual budget tracking exercise to merely placation since they are ineffectual in informing the policy process. This is already happening now where ministry policy actors and DPs are reluctant to wholesomely embrace the reports from such budget tracking by CSCQBE. The exercise is thus used for legitimisation purposes where CSOs are seen to have participated in the policy process.

Apart from budget tracking, CSOs do not have a unified M&E system targeting policies in the sector in a concerted way. Administration of 'similar' projects that use different M&E systems and which don't 'talk' to each other greatly reduces their credibility of the 'evidence' generated in the eyes of the ministry and DPs leverage on policy. This reduces their claims to legitimacy of their voice during policy dialogue and lead to rejection of their input into the policy to be adopted. What this means is that their participation in the policy dialogue becomes mere placation where civil society organisations are allowed to say things and be heard but their views are not considered for informing ensuing policy.

Sadly, the MoEST monitoring and evaluation system is not robust and probably does not exploit what information is derived from the existing M&E to inform the policy making process. For instance although school inspection reports have provided a very rich and ready source of information to inform policy process in many other countries in education sector, this has not been the case for Malawi (Mussa, 2009). Therefore indigenous knowledge of how policy is performing in schools and school communities is of no consequence to making of subsequent policy.

5.4 Challenges faced by CSOs while participating in policy process

Finally the last research question was: What are the challenges that civil society organisations encounter as they participate in education policy process? In answer to this question three key challenges emerged which included animosity and mistrust especially between government policy actors and civil society organisations, inadequate representation of civil society organisations in sectoral policy structures and the envisaged difficulty to access funds using current SWAp funding mechanism. The cumulative effect of these challenges on CSOs' involvement in the policy process has been that of limiting the efficacy of their influence on education policy to merely tokenism.

The routine involvement of the CSOs in SWAp policy structures has not yet helped to reduce the adversarial relationship between CSOs and government policy actors. This is contrary to what is espoused by Blackstock et al., 2007 and Stringer et al., 2006(as cited

in Reed, 2008) that it would lead to congenial partnership between the policy actors. Apparently this could be because both government policy actors and CSOs are not keen on developing genuine partnership between them. Government fears the CSOs and continues to shun them. This was confirmed by one key MoEST informant who commented that: 'There are two groups policy makers fear to interact with regularly and these are the civil society and the media'. Similarly CSOs have continued to advance their 'watch dog' role regardless of its 'negative' effect on their relationship with government policy actors. Thus the routine involvement of CSOs in the policy structures is not because government honestly believes CSOs have much technical value that they bring to the policy process as advanced by (Pollard & Court, 2005). Rather it merely fulfils their obligation to donors of including CSOs in the policy process. The government policy actors are merely using CSOs for 'legitimating' the policy dialogue. This is tantamount to 'extractive participation' (Rose, 2003) and according to Arnstein (1969) is non-participation.

Not focussing on building good relationship with government policy actors denies CSOs an opportunity to influence policy in the sector. Good relationship between government and CSOs policy actors enhances partnership (Haggerty, 2007)and therefore 'participation' (Arnstein, 1969). It is important however to note that during the time of data collection, the researcher was made to understand that the coalition (CSCQBE) had reduced its confrontational stance and become more reconciliatory. This change of approach would presumably yield results as was the case for TEN/MET(Haggerty, 2007).

While it cannot be guaranteed, efforts to build good relationships among CSOs and government policy actors would help to increase the efficacy of CSOs to influence policy because in one sense it enhances possibility of government giving them a 'listening ear'. Otherwise since animosity and mistrust makes it difficult for government to listen to CSOs, their efficacy to influence policy will continue to be limited (Mundyet al.,2008; Cherry, 2007).

Representation at the policy table must take into account relevance and inclusiveness of the stakeholders. However, in Malawi the sector does not yet have the complete picture of all CSOs that are playing a role in the sector thus , consequently only a select few CSOs which are visible to the inviting agency get invited to the policy table as shown in **Table 4.2.** Marginalisation of a larger section of stakeholders from the policy process robs the CSOs' voice of its legitimacy. That is why contrary to their own perception, government and DPs reject CSOs' claim of influencing policy in the sector because it questions the legitimacy of their 'voice'. Cherry (2007) explained that irrelevant and non-inclusive participation of stakeholders in the national policy processes reduces the quality of policies made since they do not address the needs of the marginalized and voiceless.

The efforts at ensuring relevance and inclusiveness among CSOs that sit at the policy table by the coalition secretariat have not yielded desired results because among other reasons of the limited pool of CSOs from which to make the selection. At the time of the study, there were efforts to compile a comprehensive list of all CSOs and their niche in

the education sector. This exercise when duly completed may help to address this challenge of lack of representativeness. For the meantime, the coalition secretariat may need to go into serious discussions with the coalition membership to review the rules and procedures regarding selection of CSOs to the policy table. So again it can be safely concluded that despite their input into the policy dialogue, the key policy players which are government and development partners are at pains to include the CSOs' voice into policy decisions because in their view, the CSOs' voice lacks legitimacy.

The CSOs have great trepidation over the envisaged SWAp funding mechanism because it places them in a subcontractor position to government. In their view the CSOs most critical of government will stand to lose the most because government would make it very difficult for them to access the pool funds. According to Mundy et al. (2007) CSOs in Mali, Kenya, Tanzania and Burkina Faso found out that being in a subcontractor position led to failure to get timely funding in the event that government failed to meet the donor requirements. Additionally, it would also mean failure to get funding due to corruption within government sector systems. Further, CSOs in Mali expressed fears of losing their financial viability and independence (Cherry, 2007).The findings of this study only add to the growing voice of concern among CSOs in the new SWAp funding mechanism and how it would limit CSOs influence in the sector. Limited funds will adversely affect CSOs' capacity to carry out sustainable research and advocacy. Unfortunately, lack of very good evidence-based advocacy work reduces CSOs' efficacy

in the policy process (Mundy et al., 2008). This therefore calls for re-examination of the funding mechanisms if CSOs' role as partners at the policy table is to be meaningful.

Thus in effect animosity and mistrust, lack of legitimacy of their voice, lack of credible policy positions informed by research-based evidence due to lack of financial and human capacity in effect limit the influence of CSOs in the policy process to that of tokenism.

5.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, CSOs have been accorded enviable political space to interface with key policy actors in the ministry including development partners to effect policy change. However, although civil society is well represented at each level of SWAp policy structures, it is nonetheless underrepresented in terms of number of CSOs that actually sit at each level. In addition, it is not represented in Technical management committee and TWGs where issues of finances and power are transacted. Finally, CSOs are not represented in the MoEST management structure which effectively has final authority and decision making power to determine and effect policy.

Furthermore, CSO's capacity to influence policy change during policy making is limited by its failure to use research-based evidence to inform the policy process hence, limiting their influence on policies formed. The annual education budget monitoring exercise and especially donor funded demonstrative projects seem to be the viable routes for them to exert influence on policy. Secondly, the existing animosity and mistrust between them

and ministry prevents them from commanding a listening ear from government policy actors which would have allowed them to exercise some leverage at the policy table. Additionally, issues like not being treated as ‘equal partners’, not having the power to ensure that their voice is adopted in policies made and being perceived as largely complementary service providers by MoEST and DPs further reduce CSOs' efficacy of influencing policy at the policy table.

Finally, performance of policy at grassroots has unfortunately generally not informed CSOs' policy positions during sittings at the policy table because their monitoring and evaluation systems do not expressly target performance of policy in the sector. However, the annual education budgetary monitoring is known to have influenced education policy through influencing increasing funding to implement NESP. As long as the cited challenges remain, CSOs' participation in sector policy process will at best only be placation and legitimation. Consequently, education policy will ultimately cease to be relevant to the needs of people at the grassroots and make participation of CSOs in policy process redundant. The only glimmer of hope is the envisaged change of approach by CSCQBE from confrontational to reconciliatory as they deal with government policy actors. This is a positive step since it will address the major concern that of building the most needed trust between CSOs and government policy actors as partners. Such trust will eventually enhance their participation at the policy table and greatly improve their efficacy to influence policy.

5.6 Implications

The existence of poor relations between ministry policy actors and CSOs means that CSOs will continue to be an insignificant player in as far as influencing education policy is concerned. Donors and development partners are repositioning their focus onto government as the driver of development in developing countries. Therefore, CSOs must aim to partner with government in their quest to make policies that address the needs and aspirations of their constituencies. Earning the trust and respect of government policy actors is therefore critical to gaining entry into the policy making milieu which at the end of the day is simply a political elite. CSOs must be sensitive to the prevailing democratic culture to ensure that their involvement is not just ensured but that their voice is given its due recognition in policies made in the sector.

Since their policy positions during policy dialogue are not usually informed by research-based evidence, it is unlikely that the needs and aspirations of their constituencies are being advanced by their presence at the policy table. Their presence at the policy table will therefore continue to be of less benefit to their constituencies. Although it cannot be guaranteed, but evidence-based policies tend to address the needs of the people. A transparent and accountable funds-disbursement and utilisation mechanism is a must if CSOs are to provide the necessary alternative voice to that of government in policy development.

The legitimacy of voice is critical if government will be obliged to listen to it. It is most probable that government fails to listen to the CSOs at the policy table because it is understood that their voice is 'strange', it is not that of the indigenous Malawian let alone representative of the rest of the coalition members. Representativeness of the voice contributes to that legitimacy therefore, it is important that CSOs that sit in the policy structures are representative of all CSOs working in the sector irrespective of their stature and geographical location. This will also improve not only the quality of policies made but also their implementation.

5.7 Recommendations

In view of the nature of participation and the challenges encountered by the CSOs, the study makes the following recommendations:

In order to improve the efficacy of the influence CSOs exert on the national policy process, it is essential that they have a credible voice. There is therefore need for further research to explore ways of enhancing the credibility of their voice both at the national policy table. Such research would look at a number of issues. For instance both CSOs' legitimacy and representativeness (number and type) at the national policy table; capacity to do research, policy analysis and advocacy and issues surrounding capacity building by SWAp; and how to strengthen consultation and collaboration within and among the coalition's membership and their various respective constituencies. The funding mechanism for CSOs within MoEST is another area requiring further research to explore how the funding mechanism has evolved, how it is affecting their participation in the

policy process and the coping strategies employed by the CSOs. This would help develop and consolidate independent research to inform its voice.

In terms of participation, MoEST should accept in principle the new role of CSOs as 'equal' partners in education policy process. While constitutionally the CSOs are not mandated to jointly make policy with government, MoEST should in pursuit of openness and transparency make known to the CSOs the rules and procedures that govern the participation of CSOs in the policy process. This would contribute towards more meaningful participation by CSOs at the policy table. With respect to CSOs' representation at the policy table, the number of official seats given to the civil society should be increased to include the various major types of CSOs in the sector according to their specialisation such as research, provision of academic, technical and professional education, advocacy based institutions, coalitions and networks that are national in coverage and international NGOs and CSOs (which are currently excluded). This will ensure that the voices of the marginalized are adequately captured and considered during policy process through in part more consultation among its membership especially that which attends policy dialogue with MoEST. Further, these should be included in all the SWAp policy structures to facilitate a holistic understanding of the policy issues within the sector among the CSOs.

On their part, CSOs should adopt a policy of contact and dialogue with MoEST policy actors especially directors to enhance a more friendly approach to government policy

actors and allow for trust building. This should be done both on formal and non-formal basis to develop a more personal knowledge and acceptance of each other as a way of furthering common understanding and appreciation and reduce animosity and mistrust among them.

The NESP has provided CSOs space to carry out monitoring and evaluation of policy in the sector. The study has also revealed that the policy process does not use much input from monitoring and evaluation of policy in the sector. However, apart from the annual budget monitoring exercise conducted by the coalition secretariat, CSOs have not fully embraced this very important role. By taking monitoring and evaluation as one of their key roles in the sector, it is envisaged that their voice at the policy table will become more credible and their advocacy would probably become more impactful. Monitoring and evaluation can also be used as a springboard for further development of their capacity in independent research to inform their policy positions. This would probably also facilitate their access to funds from the pool funds and enhance their independent voice.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Civil Society Organisations

1. Describe the policy structures at the Ministry of Education Science and Technology and their composition which have a lot of influence in policy formulation?
2. Describe how the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) formulates its education policies?
3. How do CSOs get to the policy table to participate in the policy process?
4. How do CSOs prepare for participation at the policy table?
5. How do you ensure that your contribution at the policy table is relevant and credible?
6. Describe how CSOs influenced the formulation of the girls' readmission policy and/or the special needs education policy.
7. How have you participated in the formulation of education policies in particular the girls' readmission policy and or the special needs education policy? Why?
8. What factors have aided your participation?
9. What challenges have you encountered in participation in education policy formulation? How did you overcome them?
10. Would you describe how you participate in the implementation of the girl's readmission policy?
11. Are there any specific programmes or activities linked to this policy that you participate in?
12. How do you participate in monitoring and evaluation of this policy?
13. What are the specific activities that you do to ensure that this policy is implemented as planned?
14. How would you regard the effectiveness of your participation (in achieving your goals)? Why?
15. What do you think are the main factors that influence education policy?
16. What recommendations would you make to improve the formulation of the education policies in education?

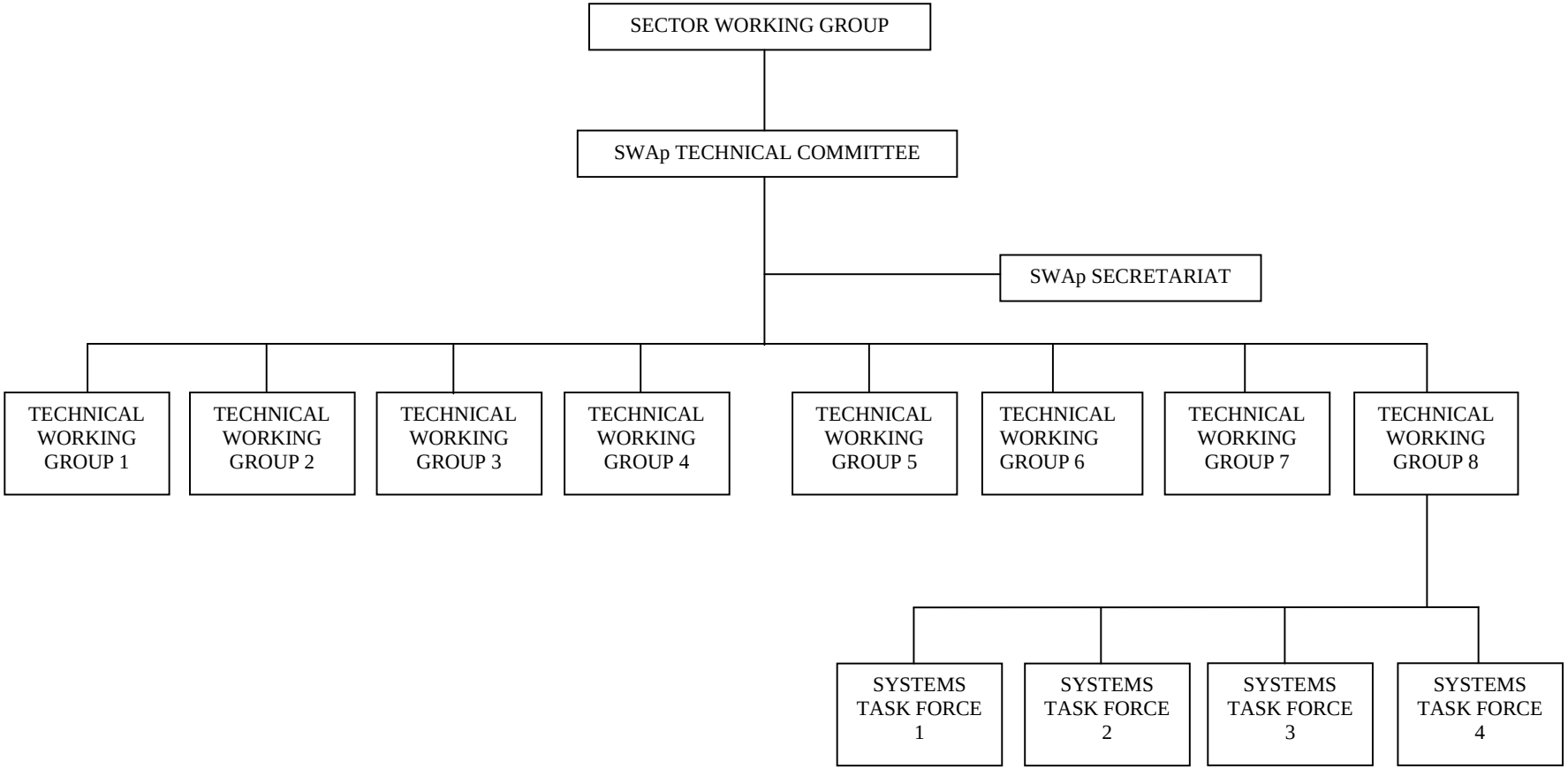
Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Government and Donors

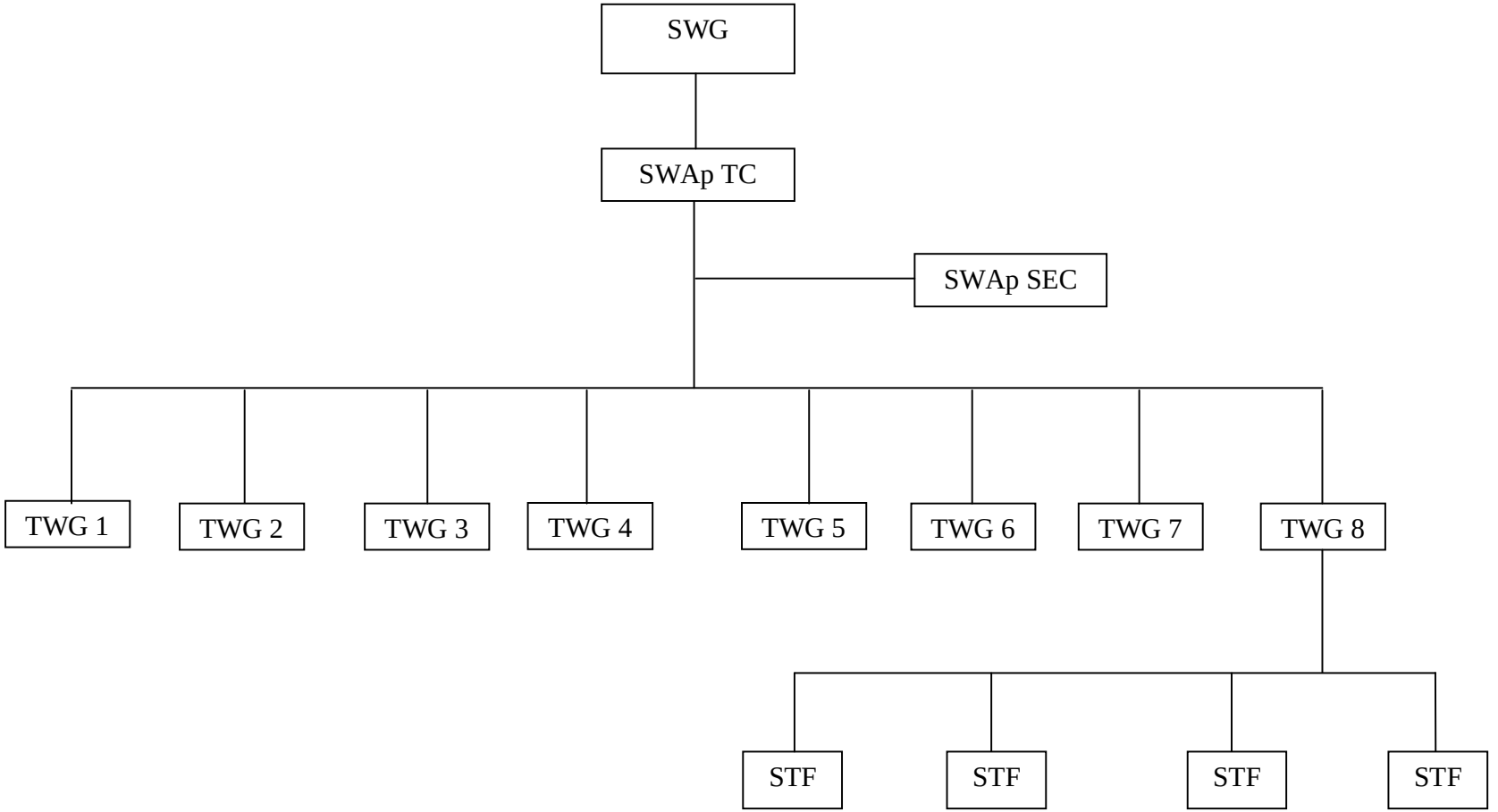
1. Describe the most influential policy structures at the Ministry of Education Science and Technology and their composition
2. Describe how the MOEST formulates its education policies?
3. How do CSOs get to the policy table to participate in the policy process?
4. How would you like the CSOs to prepare for participation at the policy table?
5. What assistance do you offer the CSOs to ensure that their contribution at the policy table is relevant and credible?
6. How did CSOs influence the formulation of the girls' readmission policy and/or the special needs education policy?
7. How did the CSOs participate in the formulation of education policies in particular the girls' re-admission policy and or the special needs education policy? Why?
8. What factors have aided CSOs participation in the policy process in the education sector?
9. What challenges have you encountered resulting from CSOs participation in education policy formulation? How did you overcome them?
10. Would you describe how you participate in the implementation of education policies in particular girls' readmission policy and or the special needs education policy?
11. Would you describe any specific programmes or activities linked to this policy that you participate in?
12. How do you participate in monitoring and evaluation of this policy?
13. How would you regard the effectiveness of CSOs participation in achieving your goals as a Ministry (official/donor) in the education sector? Why?
14. What do you think are the main factors that influence the development of education policy?
15. What recommendations would you make to the CSOs to improve the formulation of the education policies in the education sector?

Appendix C

SWAp MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



SWAp MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



KEY

SWG Sector Working Group

SWAp TC SWAp Technical Committee

SWAp SEC SWAp Secretariat

Technical Working Groups

TWG 1 Technical Working Group 1: Basic Education

TWG 2 Technical Working Group 2: Secondary Education

TWG 3 Technical Working Group 3: Tertiary Education (TecVoc and Higher Education)

TWG 4 Technical Working Group 4: Teacher Development and Management

TWG 5 Technical Working Group 5: Infrastructure

TWG 6 Technical Working Group 6: Crosscutting Issues (School Health, Special Education and Gender)

TWG 7 Technical Working Group 7: Quality Assurance

TWG 8 Technical Working Group 8: Management and Governance

System Task Forces

STF 1 System Task Force 1: Finance and Procurement

STF 2 System Task Force 2: Communication and Information Management

STF 3 System Task Force 3: Research, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

STF 4 System Task Force 4: Capacity Building

Appendix D

Terms of Reference (ToR) for
Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and
Systems Task Forces (STFs)

1. Background

The **Technical Working Groups** (**TWGs)** for education sector are established in line with the Guidelines for the Institutionalisation of the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) produced by Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economic Planning and Development in November, 2008 but also takes into consideration the complexity of the tasks as the Education sector implements the MGDS through National Education Sector Plan (NESP). The TWGs shall be answerable to the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) which has replaced the former Policy and Planning Committee. The education sector recognises certain key systems which need to be developed/strengthened for effective and efficient implementation of National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) and has established specific **Systems Task Forces(STFs).**

2. General task for TWGs and STFs

The TWGs and STFs listed below provide a forum for technical consultations. Their general task is ***to support the Education sector and Ministry of Education Science and Technology (Mo EST) as the key implementing institution in planning and implementation of different sub sector* policies/ *strategies*.** The actual sub sector policies/strategies development and implementation role remains the responsibility of MoEST departments/units/institutions in line with ESWG guidance.

3. Specific tasks for TWGs

a) Contribute to comprehensive subsector *'Political, Economic, Technological and Social'* (PETS) and '*strengths Weakness, Opportunities and Threats*' (SWOT) analysis of the subsectors.
b) Provide professional advice on development/ review of sub sector policies/strategies and sub sector budgeting

c) Contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the sub sectors in key priority areas

d) Establish, with approval from SWAp Technical committee, sub technical working groups or Task forces on priority areas as need may be.

e) Deliverables for TWGs

i) Annual Work Plans(AWPs)

ii) Quarterly reports on the AWPs

iii) Status reports on special assignments.

4. Specific Tasks for STFs

a) Synergise the work of all key actors in the domain.

b) Contribute to the analysis of specific agreed issues and develop roadmap leading to establishment of the domain system

c) Contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the domain system

d) Deliverables for STFs

i) Roadmap for establishment of the domain system

ii) Annual Work Plans (AWPs) that feed into sub sector work plans

ii) Quarterly reports (QRs) on the AWPs that contribute to Sub sector quarterly reports

5. The TWGs

In reference to the recommendations of the Policy and Planning Committee of 18/02/2010 and the revised ToR above and in consideration of maintaining good working performance especially for Teacher Education and Cross Cutting current TWGs and the importance to improve the link in key areas of quality assurance between all levels from primary to higher education, the new TWGs are:

i. Basic education

ii. Secondary education

iii. Tertiary education (TEVET and Higher education)

iv. Teacher development and management

v. Infrastructure

vi. Cross cutting Issues (School health, Special education and Girls education)

vii. Quality assurance

vii. Management and Governance

6. The STFs

i. Finance and Procurement;

ii .Communication and I information management;

iii. Planning Monitoring and Evaluation; and

iv. Capacity Building

Note: *The TWGs and STFs can carry out any additional activity with approval from the SWAp Technical committee to avoid duplications or overlaps*.

The TWGs and the STFs shall meet at least **once a month**.

Appendix E

1. BASIC EDUCATION TWG

a) Membership: The following are the members of the Technical Working Group on Basic Education:

1. Director of Basic Education	**Chairperson**
2. Education Advisor (DfID)	**Co-chairperson**
3. Officer (DBE)	**Secretary**
4. Representative	National Library Service
5. Representative	MANEB
6. Representative	MZUNI
7. Representative	Montford College
8. Representative	DTED/Lilongwe TTC
9. Representative	ISAMA
10. Representative	CSCQBE
11. Representative	MoLG
12. Representative	MoGCD
13. Representative	ODPP
14. Representative	DEM/CPEA
15. Schools Inspector	EMAS
16. Planning Officer	DEP
17. DP Representative	USAID
18. DP Representative	UNICEF
19. DP Representative	JICA
20. DP Representative	CIDA

- CIDA Canadian International Development Agency
- CPEA Coordinating Primary Education Advisor
- CSCQBE Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education
- DBE Directorate of Basic Education
- DEM District Education Manager
- DEP Directorate of Education Planning
- DfID Department for International Development
- DP Development Partner
- DTED Department of Teacher Education and Development
- EMAS Education Methods Advisory Services
- ISAMA Independent Schools Association in Malawi
- JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
- MANEB Malawi National Examinations Board
- MoGCD Ministry of Gender and Child Development
- MoLG Ministry of Local Government

- MZUNI Mzuzu University
- ODPP Office of the Director of Public Procurement
- UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
- USAID United States Agency for International Development

2. SECONDARY EDUCATION TWG

a) Membership: The following are the members of the Technical Working Group on Secondary Education:

1.	Director of Secondary Education	**Chairperson**
2.	Education Advisor (JICA)	**Co-chairperson**
3.	Officer (DSE)	**Secretary**
4.	Representative	UNIMA
5.	Representative	DCE
6.	Representative	MCDE
7.	Representative	MANEB
8.	Representative	MIE
9.	Representative	ACEM
10.	Representative	PRISAM
11.	Representative	LEG
12.	Representative	EDM
13.	Schools Inspector	EMAS
14.	Planning Officer	DEP
15.	DP Representative	EU
16.	DP Representative	USAID
17.	DP Representative	AfDB

- ACEM Association of Christian Educators in Malawi
- AfDB African Development Bank
- DCE Domasi College of Education
- DEP Directorate of Education Planning
- DSE Directorate of Secondary Education
- EDM Education Division Manager
- EMAS Education Methods Advisory Services
- EU European Union
- JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
- LEG Link for Education Governance
- MANEB Malawi National Examinations Board
- MCDE Malawi College of Distance Education
- MIE Malawi Institute of Education
- PRISAM Private Schools Association in Malawi
- UNIMA University of Malawi

- USAID United States Agency for International Development

3. TEACHER EDUCATION TWG

a) Membership: Members of the Teacher Education Technical Working Group include:

1.	Acting Director DTED	**Chairperson**
2.	Education Advisor (CIDA)	**Co-chairperson**
3.	Officer (DTED	**Secretary**
4.	Representative	UNIMA
5.	Representative	DCE
6.	Representative	MANEB
7.	Representative	MIE
8.	Representative	MoLG
9.	Representative	TUM
10.	Representative	DAPP
11.	Schools Inspector	EMAS
12.	Planning Officer (MandE)	DEP
13.	DP Representative	USAID
14.	DP Representative	GTZ
15.	DP Representative	JICA
16.	DP Representative	DfID

- CIDA Canadian International Development Agency
- DAPP Development Aid from People to People
- DCE Domasi College of Education
- DfID Department for International Development
- DTED Department of Teacher Education and Development
- EMAS Education Methods Advisory Services
- EP Directorate of Education Planning
- GTZ German GesellschaftfürTechnischeZusammenarbeit
- JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
- MANEB Malawi National Examinations Board
- MIE Malawi Institute of Education
- MoLG Ministry of Local Government
- TUM Teachers Union of Malawi
- UNIMA University of Malawi
- USAID United States Agency for International Development

4. TERTIARY and HIGHER EDUCATION TWG

a) Membership: The following are the members of the Technical Working Group on Tertiary and Higher Education:

1.	Acting Director for Higher Education	**Chairperson**
2.	Education Advisor (AfDB)	**Co-chairperson**
3.	Officer DTVT	**Secretary**
4.	Representative	UNIMA
5.	Representative	MZUNI
6.	Representative	Private Universities
7.	Representative	TEVETA
8.	Representative	NMCM
9.	Representative	SOCAM
10.	Representative	DHRMD
11.	Schools Inspector	EMAS
12.	Planning Officer	DEP
13.	DP Representative	WB
14.	DP Representative	NORAD

- AfDB African Development Bank
- DEP Directorate of Education Planning
- DHRMD Department of Human Resource Management and Development
- DTVT Directorate of Technical and Vocational Training
- EMAS Education Methods Advisory Services
- MZUNI Mzuzu University
- NMCM Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi
- NORAD Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
- SOCAM Society of Accountants in Malawi
- TEVETA Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority
- UNIMA University of Malawi
- WB World Bank

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES TWG

a) Membership: Members of the Technical Working Group on Cross-cutting Issues are:

1.	Deputy Director HIV/AIDS	**Chairperson**
2.	Education Advisor (WFP)	**Co-chairperson**
3.	Officer DSNE	**Secretary**
4.	Representative	DTED
5.	Representative	NAC
6.	Representative	Montfort College
7.	Representative	MoH
8.	Representative	MoGCD
9.	Representative	MoLG
10.	Representative	MoD
11.	Representative	CHRMD
12.	Schools Inspector	EMAS
13.	HIV/AIDS Officer	DEP
14.	DP Representative	UNFPA
15.	DP Representative	UNAIDS
16.	DP Representative	WHO
17.	DP Representative	GTZ
18.	DP Representative	UNICEF
19.	DP Representative	USAID

- CHRMD Controller of Human Resource Management and Development
- DEP Directorate of Education Planning
- DP Development Partner
- DSNE Directorate of Special Needs Education
- DTED Department of Teacher Education and Development
- EMAS Education Methods Advisory Services
- GTZ German GesellschaftfürTechnischeZusammenarbeit
- MoD Ministry of Disabilities
- MoGCD Ministry of Gender and Child Development
- MoH Ministry of Health
- MoLG Ministry of Local Government
- NAC National AIDS Commission
- UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
- UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
- USAID United States Agency for International Development
- WFP World Food Programme
- WHO World Health Organisation

6. QUALITY AND STANDARDS

a) Membership: The following are the members of the Technical Working Group on Quality and Standards of Education:

1.	Director EMAS	**Chairperson**
2.	Education Advisor (UNICEF)	**Co-chairperson**
3.	Officer EMAS	**Secretary**
4.	Representative	MIE
5.	Representative	DCE
6.	Representative	CSCQBE
7.	Representative	Private Universities
8.	Representative	DBE
9.	Representative	DSE
10.	Representative	DHE/DTVT
11.	Representative	DTED
12.	Representative	EDM
13.	Representative	DEM
14.	Representative	DSNE
15.	Planning Officer	DEP
16.	DP Representative	CIDA
17.	DP Representative	USAID

- CIDA — Canadian International Development Agency
- CSCQBE — Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education
- DBE — Directorate of Basic Education
- DCE — Domasi College of Education
- DEM — District Education Manager
- DEP — Directorate of Education Planning
- DHE — Directorate of Higher Education
- DP — Development Partner
- DSE — Directorate of Secondary Education
- DSNE — Directorate of Special Needs Education
- DTED — Department of Teacher Education and Development
- DTVT — Directorate of Technical and Vocational Training
- EDM — Education Division Manager
- EMAS — Education Methods Advisory Services
- MIE — Malawi Institute of Education
- USAID — United States Agency for International Development

7. INFRASTRUCTURE TWG

a) Membership: Members of the Technical Working Group on Infrastructure are:

1.	Principal Secretary	**Chairperson**
2.	Education Advisor (GTZ)	**Co-chairperson**
3.	Officer EIMU	**Secretary**
4.	Representative	LCA
5.	Representative	MoLG
6.	Representative	MoWandT (Building Dept.)
7.	Representative	ODPP
8.	Representative	EDMU
9.	Representative	SPU
10.	Planning Officer	DEP
11.	DP Representative	DfID
12.	DP Representative	WB
13.	DP Representative	AfDB
14.	DP Representative	JICA

- AfDB African Development Bank
- DEP Directorate of Education Planning
- DfID Department for International Development
- EDMU Education Development Management Unit
- EIMU Education Infrastructure Management Unit
- GTZ German GesellschaftfürTechnischeZusammenarbeit
- JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
- LCA Lilongwe City Assembly
- MoLG Ministry of Local Government
- MoWandT Ministry of Works and Transport
- ODPP Office of the Director of Public Procurement
- SPU Specialised Procurement Unit
- UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
- WB World Bank

8. MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE TWG

a) Membership: Members of the Technical Working Group ON Management and Governance are:

1.	Senior Deputy Secretary	**Chairperson**
2.	Education Advisor (USAID)	**Co-chairperson**
3.	Officer (Administration)	**Secretary**
4.	Representative	MoLG
5.	Representative	EDM
6.	Representative	DEM
7.	Representative	CHRMD
8.	Representative	CA
9.	Planning Officer	DEP
10.	Representative	MoEST (DEPIP Prog.)
11.	DP Representative	WB
12.	DP Representative	DfID
13.	DP Representative	JICA

- CA Chief Accountant
- CHRMD Controller of Human Resource Management and Development
- DEM District Education Manager
- DEP Directorate of Education Planning
- DEPIP District Education Plan Institutionalisation Programme
- DfID Department for International Development
- EDM Education Division Manager
- EU European Union
- JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
- JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
- MoLG Ministry of Local Government
- USAID United States Agency for International Development
- WB World Bank