SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN MALAWI

By

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ABSTRACT

Many scholars and development practitioners have looked upon community participation in Basic Education as one of the fundamental principles for improving educational quality. History has established that many developed and developing countries that are doing very well in terms of education have involved communities. Numerous case studies are well documented talking about the success stories of communities contributing towards improvement of basic education quality. However, it is not very clear as to how the various communities that contributed towards improvement of basic education viewed their participation. Many countries where the basic education quality standards are low are pointing to lack of community participation as one of the contributing factors. At times the participation of the communities has been termed as unsustainable. Little is known about the perception of the communities towards their participation in improving basic education.

This research report assesses communities' perception on what they think they could effectively participate in school management. This is cross- checked with what they have actually done in the past and why. The report has also tried to establish what factors contributed to little or no participation of communities in improving basic education of their children.

The research was guided by the following main areas of focus: the activities the communities perceive they could participate in school management; the activities they actually engaged in and under whose guidance; the role of school management bodies; the governance of the school and its effect on community participation and the prospects of the community to participate in all the activities outlined in the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management policy document for the government of Malawi.

The findings have revealed that the communities have their own standards that they use in order to classify themselves as active participants in improving educational quality.

They also have their own definition of "community" which has a bearing on participation. It is therefore critical to define "community" before one can categorize participation as "sustainable" or "unsustainable". From the research, governance and social capital are other elements that need to be considered when deciding on what community should participate in school management. Capacity building of both the change agents and the community cannot be over emphasized if sustainable community participation is to be achieved. The research findings have again revealed that in Malawi, contrary to many documented papers, there are some communities that have reached, to a certain degree, some levels of sustainability when it comes to community participation.

Some areas that the Government of Malawi needs to look at when tackling the issue of community participation have also been pointed out in the research report.

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management) in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Zikani Hawkins Watson Kaunda

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to my wife Morres and all my children: Joseph, Rabecca, Shaloom, Chifundo, Ruth and Jeremiah because of their patience, encouragement and understanding during the time I was doing my studies.

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ACRONYMNS

CDA	-	Community Development Assistant
CRECCOM	-	Creative Centre for Community Mobilization
DFID	-	Department For International Development
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussions
IPAP	-	International Programme Advisory Panel
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NSCPPSM	-	National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management
PEA	-	Primary Education Advisor
PIF	-	Policy Investments Framework
PTA	-	Parents Teachers Association
SMC	-	School Management Committee
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development

List of Tables

Table 1	No of people interviewed using Questionnaire
Table 2	No of people taking part in FGD
Table 3	Information solicited from respondents
Table 4	Examples of activities done by mobilized communities
Table 5	The ladder of community participation
Table 6	Ratings of the Activeness of the School Management Bodies
Table 7	Rating of School Management Committees with reasons for rating them so
Table 8	School Management committees rating against activities done
Table 9	Ratings of PTA with reasons for rating them so
Table 10	PTA ratings against activities carried out
Table 11	% of respondents that had attended the meetings called by different stakeholders and % of those attended that aired out their views
Table 12	The way different stakeholders conducted the meetings
Table 13	Stakeholders responsible for particular activities
Table 14	Community participation in activities outlined in the NSCPPSM policy
Table 15	Activities communities perceive and actually participate in versus government defined ones

List of Diagrams

Diagram 1	"The community" according to USAID definition
Diagram 2	"Community participation" as defined by the author
Diagram 3	Mark Moores' Strategic Triangle Model
Diagram 4	Levels of community participation according to Atkins

List of Graphs

Figure 1	Maximum and mean number of number of different groups that attended a particular meeting
Figure 2a & b	Perception of respondents on areas communities can participate in

Appendices

Appendix 1	Matrix of community contribution towards improvement of Education Quality
Appendix 2	List of twenty-six schools from the zone
Appendix 3	Questionnaires

Case Studies

Case Study 1	Fund raising with creativity
Case Study 2	Sensitization and mobilization by School Management Committees
Case Study 3	Teachers in the forefront on school development

CONTENTS

1.0 **Chapter One: Introduction**

1.1	Background to the Study	13
1.2	The Rationale of the Study	15
1.3	Statement of the Problem	16
1.4	Objectives of the Study	18
1.5	Organization of the Study Report	19
1.6	Conclusion for Chapter 1	21

2.0 **Chapter Two: Sustainable Community Participation: Concepts and Theories** **22**

2.1	Theoretical Perspectives on Sustainable Community Participation	22
2.2	Definition of Concept	23
2.2.1	Sustainable	24
2.2.2	Community	24
2.2.3	Community Participation	26
2.2.4	Social Capital	29
2.2.5	Policy	30
2.2.6	Policy Management Process in Africa	32
2.2.7	Policy Making Models	33
2.2.8	Atkins Theory on Community Participation	44
2.2.9	The Need for Community Participation	46
2.3	Some of the factors that facilitate or hinder sustainable community participation in school management process	49
2.3.1	Social Capital	49
2.3.2	Governance	50
2.4	Conclusion	51

3.0 **Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology** 53
3.1 Data Collection 54
3.2 Data Analysis 60
3.3 Some possible Limitations in the Study 61
3.3.1 Reliability 61
3.3.2 Validity 61
3.3.3 Representative 62
3.3.4 Neutrality 64
3.4 Limitations and Recommendations for the future Studies 62
3.5 Conclusion 63

4.0 **Chapter Four: The Research Results** 64
4.1 Background to Community Participation in Malawi 64
4.2 Government of Malawi Policy on Community Participation in Managing Primary Schools 65
4.3 The School Management Institutions 66
4.3.1 The School Management Committees (SMC) 66
4.3.2 The Parents Teachers Association (PTA) 66
4.4 The Challenge faced by Government of Malawi on Community Participation in Primary Schools 67
4.5 Budgetary Implications 70
4.6 Governance and Community Participation 72
4.6.1 Areas that communities have been able to participate in other countries 82
4.6.2 Malawi Government stated areas, that communities could participate in 83
4.7 Community Participation in School Management in Malawi as Revealed through Field Research Findings 85
4.7.1 School Catchment Area 86
4.7.2 School Management Institutions Activeness 86
4.7.3 Community Participation in Decision Making Process 93

4.7.4 Communities' Perception on what Activities they could Participate in 100
4.7.5 Community Perception on what activities outlined in NSCPPSM could they participate in 104
4.8 Conclusion 109

5.0 **Chapter Five: Application of Theoretical Frameworks to the Field Research Findings on Community Participation 110**

5.1 Definitions of the concepts in relation to field research findings 111
5.1.1 Community 111
5.1.2 Sustainability 116
5.1.3 "Sustainability Participation" 117
5.1.4 Community Participation 118
5.1.5 Social Capital 121

5.2 Institutional Frameworks in line with Community Participation 123
5.2.1 The School Management Committees and the Parents Teachers Association contributing substantive value 123
5.2.2 School Management Committee and Parents Teachers Association maintaining legitimacy and policy sustainability 125
5.2.3 Operational and Administrative Feasibility Action 126
5.2.4 Institutional Arrangements 126
5.2.5 Transparency and Accountability 127

5.3 Levels of participation of School Management Bodies in school management as revealed by the survey results. 128
5.3.1 Active or passive role of community participation 129
5.3.2 Levels of Participation 130

5.4 Conclusion 132

6.0 **Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations** **133**

6.1 Activities the communities perceive they could participate in and what they actually participated in when it comes to school management 134

6.2 The role of school management bodies (SMC's/PTAs) in school management. 135

6.3 The effect of school government on community participation in school management 137

6.4 Recommendations for Future Study 139

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims at giving the background to the study, the rationale for conducting the study, the research problem, the objectives of the study, and an outline of how the study report will be organized. The main research question is raised in this chapter. Some explanations on the scope and focus of the researcher are also made.

1.1 Background to the study:

Most countries in Africa have high illiteracy rates and Malawi, one of the small countries in the Southern African region, is no exception. Out of the estimated 10.5 million people in Malawi, 52% are female, of which 68 % are illiterate. Governments in the Southern Africa region, including Malawi, have tried to adopt policies that can address this pathetic situation. For instance, in 1994, the government of Malawi introduced free primary education that has led to an increase in primary school enrolment figures to its current level of 3 million from approximately one million. However, the increase in enrolment has led to low education quality manifested in the form of high absenteeism, repetition and dropout rates especially amongst girls. This drop in education quality is due to several problems including, but not limited to lack of infrastructure, lack of teachers, inadequate teaching and learning materials, poor parental attitudes towards education especially girls, and cultural practices and beliefs. This is despite the existence of school management structures that involve communities.

Notwithstanding, the Malawi government's main policy objective for the education sector is to "develop an efficient, high quality system of

education, of type and size, appropriate both to the available resources and to the political, social and economic aspirations of the nation," (Malawi Government Basic Statistics, 1997:1). The government of Malawi believes that education contributes to economic and social development and as such aims at creating an educated populace. However, this thrust is thwarted, as stipulated in the Policy Investment Framework (PIF) 2000 to 2015 document (2002:3) by:

- Limited and unequal access to educational opportunity
- Declining educational quality
- A school curriculum that does not effectively address individual and societal needs.
- Poor planning and management capacity and inadequate financing

The government of Malawi has put in place a number of policies and strategies in order to address these constraints. One policy adopted concerns the involvement of communities in the management of the primary schools. The PIF document is very explicit on the importance of community participation in the management of primary schools. It goes further to show how it, or lack of it, is affecting the quality of basic education. This policy investment document has even stated some specific details of the education programs that are to be embarked on in order to achieve community participation in basic education i.e. community mobilization campaigns. What this document does not clearly spell out are the reasons why there is need to have community mobilization campaigns when there are school committees and parents teachers associations that, according to the 1962 Education Act, (Ministry of Education Policy 2002:14) are responsible for ensuring community participation in primary schools.

A number of studies have been conducted in Africa and have outlined some of the activities the communities can be engaged in, in order to improve basic education quality but fall short in explaining what they, the communities, actually perceive they could do on their own without external facilitation. It is in this regard that there is need to focus in this area and it is the aim of this research report to try to fill in the gap.

1.2 **The rationale of the study:**

It is important to carry out an assessment of communities' perceptions on what and how they think they could effectively participate in school management, what they have actually done and why, in order to get an idea whether or not what is outlined in the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management (NSCPPSM) document is being implemented. The study can thus be used to redefine what is meant by community participation taking into account the communities' perception. Furthermore, the study can be used to assess the planned government strategy to launch a community mobilization campaign. The latter stated reason will enable the community mobilization campaign to be implemented in a more meaningful way as the perceptions of communities are taken aboard. One thing that will also be critically looked at is the democratic nature of the communities in running their affairs. The study will thus investigate how the school community governance affects community participation in improving education.

The study is in line with the NSCPPSM document (2003:1) that calls for targeted research that will contribute to providing greater understanding and deeper insight to the direction of community participation in primary schools.

1.3 **Statement of the problem:**

The introduction of the free primary education saw the enrolment increase from 1.9 million to about 3.2 million pupils in primary education schools. This, coupled with the poor agrarian economy with a GDP of US$9.4 billion and GDP per capital of US$900, seems to have lowered education quality standards with repetition and dropouts being rampant. Poor or lack of proper use of the social capital in stock also seems to worsen the situation. The government of Malawi can thus hardly fund all the services. This therefore, calls for coordinated and collective effort between the government and communities in order to improve education standards.

The government has put in place the PIF (2000) document that emphasizes the importance of drawing in community participation in school management through the school management bodies in order to improve educational quality. However, in reality,

> "School Management Committees (SMC's) and Parents Teachers Association (PTA's) often do not exist, or if they do, are largely dormant. In addition, where school management committees do exist, their role is still predominantly one of organizing the maintenance of school infrastructure. There is very little participation from communities and parents in other more contentious school management issues such as monitoring of teachers' performance" (NSCPPSM (2003:4).

In the same document (NSCPPSM, 2003:9), it is further stated that the single common form of community participation in education is through the provision of labour and or material resources. This type of participation has been referred to as "unsustainable participation."

The NSCPPSM document and other literature have outlined areas where communities need to participate in order to achieve sustainable community participation. These areas include:

- Planning and designing of school action plan;
- Sensitization of the general community on the importance of community involvement in education;
- Conducting needs assessment and priorities;
- Developing social contracts;
- Actively participating in the management of their primary schools;
- Budgeting;
- Resource mobilization and allocation;
- Sustainability and ownership;
- Capacity building and;
- Supervision and monitoring of activities.

This looks like the ideal and most effective way of communities contributing towards education quality in their areas. However, what is lacking in the literature are the views of the school communities on what activities they perceive they could participate in and how. Should they just be evaluated against the criteria set and being advocated by the government or world standards when it comes to community participation? How sustainable will that participation be without the influence of external participants? Do these communities have the social capital to match up with the expectations of the government on their participation in the management of their schools? These are some of the questions to which this study will try to get some answers.

1.4 Objectives of the study:

As stated earlier on, the purpose of this study is to investigate communities' perceptions on their participation in school management. The following are the specific objectives of the study.

- To investigate the activities the communities perceive they could participate in terms of school management.

- To establish the activities that the communities have previously engaged themselves in under the guidance or no guidance of the SMCs and PTAs

- To establish the role of the School Management Committees and Parents Teachers Association in school management.

- To investigate whether the governance of the school has any effect on community participation in school management.

- To establish the prospects for the community to participate in all the activities outlined in the NSCPPSM document.

The findings of this study will be able to define exactly what is meant by community participation from the communities' perception and thereby assist in mapping out Social Mobilization Campaign Strategy for improving education quality through the involvement of communities. The study will also be able to establish parameters against which communities' participation can be measured rather than the globally set standards.

1.5 Organization of this Study report:

The paper is organized into six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first is the introductory chapter that actually provides the background and rationale of the study from the researcher's view. The problem, the objectives of the study, and the research questions, are also explained in this chapter. The main question raised is the meaning, of communities' participation from the community's perception. In this chapter some explanations are made on the scope and focus of the researcher.

Chapter 2: Sustainable Community Participation: Concepts and Theories

This chapter presents relevant literature reviewed on the concepts and theoretical frameworks on sustainable community participation as defined by different authors. The focus of the literature survey is to define concepts like "sustainable," "community," "participation," "policy" and "social capital." The theoretical frameworks cover mainly the context in which community participation occurs and the areas perceived by the various authors that the communities could participate in the field of education. Factors facilitating and hindering sustainable community participation are also explored in this chapter. The literature reviewed will be used for analysis in this study.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter explains the research design, methodology, techniques utilized and the process of data analysis. Some possible limitations in the

study that include: reliability, validity, representative, neutrality are also discussed. The limitations and recommendations for the future studies are also presented.

Chapter 4: Community Participation in School Management as Revealed through Research Findings

The chapter gives the background to community participation in Malawi and also outlines in detail the research findings that were obtained from key target groups selected to be interviewed. These include: local leaders, PTA and SMC committee members, teachers, parents and pupils. The main focus of the interviews the Focus Group Discussions were on communities' perceptions on what activities they could participate in and what they actually participated in, including decision-making.

Chapter 5: Application of Theoretical Frameworks to the Field Research Findings on Community Participation

The chapter is a critical analysis of the information that was obtained through the interviews that was conducted with the various interviewees in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter 2 of the report. The main findings are discussed under the central themes that recurred during discussions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

This is a concluding section of the report that looks at the results in relation to the research aims and question. Recommendations are made for the Malawi government on sustainable community participation in education and also to the next researchers on the topic. The chapter also gives a glimpse on the lessons learnt from the information collected as

well as theory and experiences from other countries. A way forward is also proposed in the concluding section.

1.6 Conclusion for chapter 1:

The objective of this section was to give a brief introduction to the research report. It has given a general picture of what is expected and has discussed the background to study, rationale for conducting the study, research problem and the objectives of the study. It has also outlined the organization of the study report. In the subsequent chapters, more details will be furnished on each topic.

CHAPTER TWO: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will first of all give brief definitions on the concepts of sustainable community participation, policy and social capital. This will be followed by factors facilitating or hindering community participation in order to shed more light as to why there are the existing levels of community participation. Finally, a conclusion will be made based on the above discussions.

2.1 Theoretical perspectives on sustainable community participation

> "There is evidence that schools are more effective when parents and local citizens are actively involved. Teachers are more committed, students achieve higher test scores, and better use is made of school facilities in those communities where parents and citizens take an active interest in children's educational well-being" (The World Bank 1992).

The existing literature spells out clearly the importance or need for communities to participate in the school management process. Others have even gone further to point out that "Education for All" or "Quality Education for all" will just be a dream not realized if communities do not participate in the management of the primary schools. More often than not we hear statements such as "we must involve the whole community in the education of our children," and "lack of community participation will lead to failures in improving education quality." These are excellent, indeed noble ideas that have the support of most research study results, but how practical are they? Literature is limited in that it fails to define community participation against communities' abilities and capacities as defined by

the very community. This has a bearing when it comes to measuring the levels of success of participatory development programs that are being implemented by various organizations. Unclear defined social capital of a particular community has led to it being ranked a failure when it comes to community participation in education.

The literature in Malawi is limited when it comes to providing the current levels or degree of community participation in school management process that could be defined as community participation by the communities themselves. It is the aim of this chapter to define the concepts and theoretical frameworks surrounding sustainable community participation as defined by various authors. Some models utilized in the management of policies will be looked at in order to understand some factors that underpin the implementation of various policies including the community participation in education policy that the Malawi Government has put in place. Areas that have been outlined by various authors that communities could participate in regarding school management process will also be highlighted. These will be compared to the research findings on what communities in Malawi perceive to be possible areas where they, themselves, feel they could participate in when it comes to school management process. Factors facilitating or hindering community participation will also be tackled in this chapter.

2.2 **Definition of Concepts:**

It is very vital to first of all define the concepts that are relevant to policy and sustainable community participation in order for one to know how they are applied in the study. The following concepts are going to be defined:

2.2.1 ***Sustainable:***

This word has as varied definition as the people trying to define it. Webster (1996) cited by Columbia University's Biosphere 2 centre (http://www.eeexchange.org/sustainability/content/A/1/HTML) defines sustainability as a "noun referring to a state or condition that can be maintained over an indefinite period of time. The verb sustain is rich with meaning and in various contexts can connote to keep up or keep going; to endure without giving way; to support, hold or bear up, to provide for; to supply with necessities of life, to uphold as valid just or correct."

Brundtland (1987:43) defines sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meeting their need."

In this study, sustainable will be defined as something that can continue even regardless of whatever opposing forces are being met. Something that has some self-existing in-built mechanism within it that enables it to exist forever.

2.2.2 ***Community:***

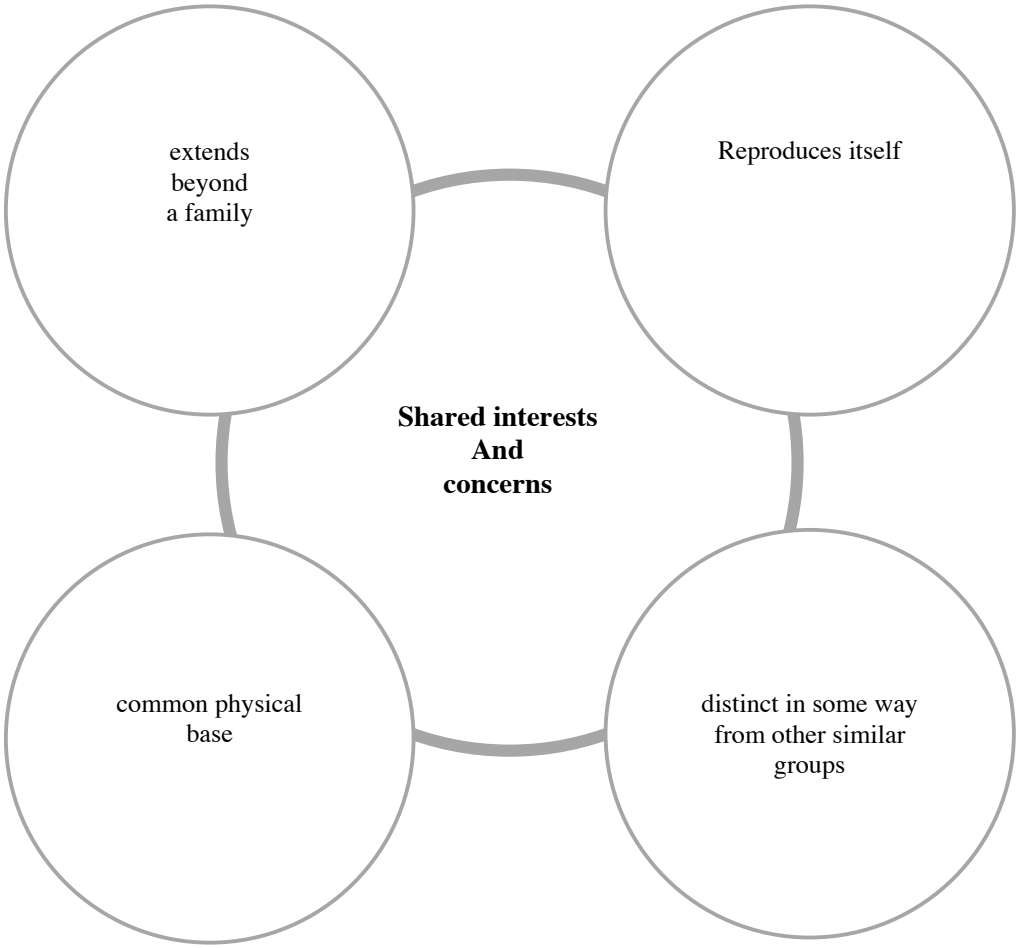
Chectham (2001:2) defines community as a "group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perceptions and engage in joint action in geographical locations or setting." However, USAID (1999:4) defines community as,

> "a group of people that has in common a network of shared interests and concerns, a common symbolic or physical base, an extension beyond the nuclear or extended family membership

which is through birth and marriage and also sees itself as distinct in some way from other similar groups."

This is illustrated by diagram 1:

Diagram I: "The Community" according to USAID Definition



Adapted from USAID, 1999

It should be noted that a community could expand or contract depending on the issues that is being dealt with.

International Programme Advisory Panel (IPAP) (1996:1) defines community as a group of people in a specific geographical area, the social institutions in that particular area, the social interaction patterns and the social control mechanisms and norms.

Betham (1992:2) defines community as "the commonwealth and common interests commonly understood, of people living together in a place and wishing to continue to do so. To put it in another way, community is locally understood as interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy and local nature."

For the purposes of this study, community refers to a group of people that have a common defined goal, living in a particular area whose identity is defined by particular values and norms that govern them.

2.2.3 ***Community Participation:***

Chectham (2001) defines participation as either negligible or co-opted when members of the community serve as token representatives with no part in decision-making or it could be termed as collective action as long as local people initiate action, set the agenda, and work towards a commonly defined goal.

However, Betham (1992:4) again defines community participation when the people have some say and are able to have influence on collective decision made while at the same time derive some educative value from it.

The United Nations (1981:5) define community participation as the creation of opportunities to actively contribute and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development?

Others, like the Central Independent Monitoring Unit (2002:2), have defined community participation as an end in itself – "the empowerment of the people" and at the same time defined it as a means to an end whereby the immediate school community i.e. parents, teachers, community leaders (village heads and religious leaders) are involved in school development.

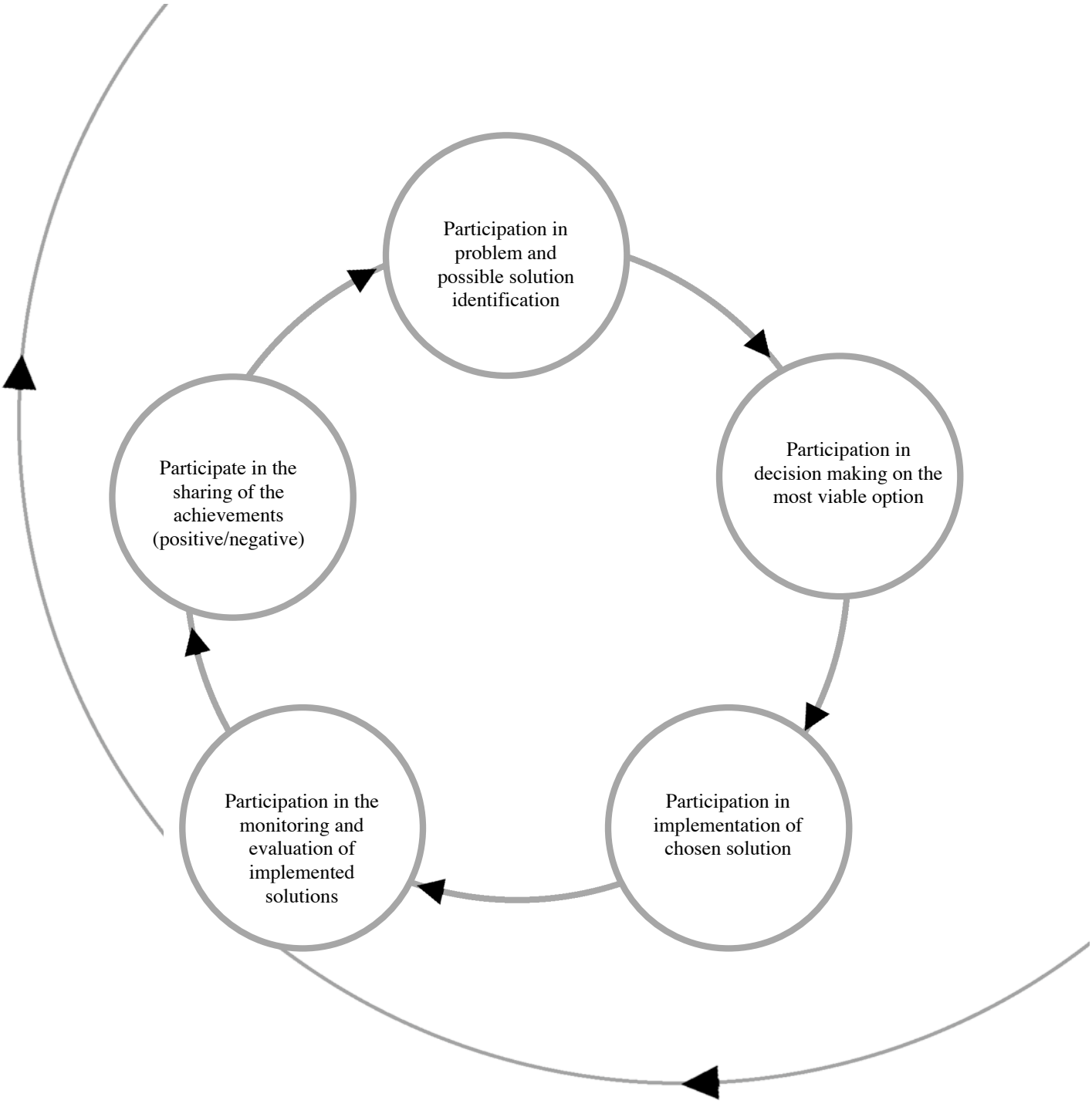
The IPAP, the Programme Development Department and the Institute of Population Studies, University of Exeter (1996:4) gave a very elaborate definition of community participation. They defined community participation as

> "an education and empowering process in which people, in partnership with those that are able to assist them, identify problems and needs. They also increasingly assume responsibility themselves to plan, manage, control and assess the collective actions that are proved necessary."

In this study, community participation will be defined to mean both as a means and as an end whereby the communities are able to identify their own problems, assess possible solutions to the problems, decide on the course of action to take, implement the chosen solutions, monitor and evaluate the implemented solutions.

Diagram 2 gives a clear picture of the above definition. The processes in community participation are on going and so much interlinked. Jumping or being excluded at one stage might lead to other members of the community withdrawing. The community that has both, bonding and social capital will achieve greater results than those not having such.

Diagram 2: Community Participation:



Source: The Author

However, in all the above definitions of community participation, it is not clearly defined though as to what should be the number of people participating and in how many areas before it can be concluded that there has been community participation. The study will try to critically analyze this and fill the gap.

The world bank has many times in its published papers stated that there is increasing evidence which shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. It is therefore ideal to define social capital because it is associated with community participation.

2.2.4 ***Social Capital:***

The World Bank (1999:1) defines social capital as,

> " the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions ….. social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together."

Putnam (2000:19) refers to social capital as "the connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. This is closely related to civic virtue."

Cohen and Prusak (2001:4) are more elaborate. They state that,

> "social capital consists of the stock of the active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values

and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible."

However, Fukuyama (1999:1) refers to social capital as an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals. It should be borne in mind that the norms that constitute social capital can range from a norm of reciprocity between two friends, all the way up to complex and elaborately articulated doctrines like Christianity or Confucianism.

Based on the above definitions, in this study social capital will be referred to as the virtue in an individual that is only displayed through social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness between or amongst the people in a society.

2.2.5 ***Policy***

The definition of the term policy is as varied as the people trying to define it. De Coning (2000:1) defines "policy as a statement of intent". He further states "policy articulates basic principles to be pursued to attain specific goals and actions. Policy therefore interprets the values of society and is followed by pertinent project and programme management actions."

House and Shull, (1988:2), in their writing look at policy as the general set of goals, objectives, missions, principles, resolutions and pronouncements of the government.

Stone (1997:18) says that public policy is about "communities" trying to achieve something as communities. Eastone (1953:129), as cited by De Coning, defines policy as "the authoritative allocation through the political process of values to groups or individuals in society." In this paper, policy

will be defined, taking into the above definitions, as an expressed desire intended to achieve particular outcomes while solving a certain problem while in so doing satisfying the values of the society, organization or country.

These policies could be regarded as general, if one talks of formulation process, or operational, if it concerns implementation. At times policy analysts like De Coning (1995:132), have categorized policies into prescriptive and descriptive. It is stated that prescriptive models can be utilized for analyzing policy content, results, impacts and likely consequences. On the other hand when one is dealing with policy-making process analysis, it is better to utilize descriptive models.

The prescriptive models are intended to establish whether a particular policy has had the desired results and what the potential results and consequences will be. Dye, as cited by De Coning (1995:134) regards the prescriptive models "as based on the social efficiency method related to normative theory and of a prescriptive nature. Their application could in a time context, be related to both the retrospective (during or after implementation) and the integrated (before and after implementation) types of policy analysis." De Coning (1995:134) continues further to state that a policy analyst should know all the value preferences of a particular society or community and their relative importance.

The focus of this paper is on institutional dimensions of policy management and the attention is going to be paid to both the descriptive and prescriptive models.

The research study that is utilized in applying theoretical frameworks is being conducted in Malawi. It will be ideal to look at some of the

challenges that most African countries, Malawi inclusive, face when it comes to managing policy.

2.2.6 ***Policy management process in Africa***

Most African countries, after gaining independence, embarked on development projects and programmes. De Coning and Fick (1995:8) state, "In the context of development management, it is argued that in addition to other sectoral and disciplinary cross-cutting lateral methodologies, policy process facilitation and management have become critical foci area in the present development debate."

Mutahaba, Baguma and Halfani (1993:50 - 64) mention that policy management systems have a number of organizational and institutional flaws that include: Absence of key organs, poor organization coordination, poor channels of communication, authority with poor, unclear definition roles; inhibitive relationships with parastatals, neglection of non-governmental agencies and lack of policy management skills. Oosthuizen (1996:75) suggests that in order to improve policy process in Africa, there is need to build indigenous policy capacity while Dror (1984:97) states that policy process could be improved by upgrading policy making processes and establishing improved grand policies.

Having looked at some of the challenges that African countries face in policy process management, it will be ideal to look at the various policy models that are utilized in policy process while reference is being made to the outlined challenges. The policy process models will be assessed as to whether they can be applicable to Malawian condition from where the study has been conducted.

2.2.7 ***Policy making process models***

A number of descriptive models for policy making process will be analyzed and some models on the policy process and institutional frameworks will be adapted to analyze the community participation in the management of primary schools while looking at the developed policy on community participation.

The Group Model

This model hinges upon the fact that interest groups are the main changing agents of the policy. They do this by exerting pressure and interacting with policy makers to express their views, preferences and interests. Resources distribution equity is maximized since policy-making process is of participatory in nature. The model works on the assumption that the government allows the interest groups to participate in policy- making process and implementation. Various groups that represent different people in the society with different views or interests come together in a forum, which is facilitated by government, to thrush out their divergent views and come up with a common agreement on a particular social issue. This model also assumes that the "outcome public policy is representative of an equilibrium that was reached in the struggle between groups and that policy makers are sensitive to the demands of interest groups"(De Coning 1995:139). It should be noted though that sometimes it is very difficult for policy makers to only concentrate in the formative role in shaping reforms without them being influenced by the pressure groups. However, the policy makers should aim at striking a balance so that the reforms are acceptable to all interest groups even though only one group initiated the discussion.

This model could not work in Malawi before the 1994 democratic elections. Nobody dared to question and put pressure on the government before 1994 for doing so was seen as being subversive. People were told what to do as the elites thought for them. However, after 1994, the government of Malawi tried this model on some polices showing it was now responding to peoples' views. For example the presidential third term policy issue. The idea to change the two-term presidential office tenure came from the top ruling party echelon and some ruling party zealots. They advocated for this change because they said the incumbent president was ruling the country so well so that he needed to continue as there was nobody good that could replace him. Secondly, they said the incumbent president should be given time to finish the developmental projects that he had started. The interest group put much pressure on the government to change the president's tenure in office so that it was tabled in parliament twice.

Even though the policy failed to go through, the problem arose when people saw this as government only listening to the views of the ruling party. This resulted into violence and corruption so that some people were beaten up, arrested and others killed in the process, while money exchange hands to buy votes. Anarchy was the life of the day. Any body opposing this policy being put forward was regarded as unthankful to the government and the president. Some cabinet ministers that were very efficient, hardworking and who founded the ruling party were dismissed. The ethnic secular divisions widened.

Using the above example, the weakness of this model can clearly be seen. Where the government has failed to level the playing field of the interest groups, the other group is victimized. Secondly, it is very difficult to verify that the interest groups always represent the views of the majority people, more especially when the interest groups themselves are

undemocratic in their governance. This model does not fully explain the community participation in primary school management policy because there were no pressure groups. The other factor worthy noting is that there was no forum where the communities were asked their views or perceptions on what they thought they could participate in managing the primary schools. This model can therefore not be utilized in this study.

Elite/Mass Model

This model is very common in authoritative countries or organization and is well known amongst policy analysts. It is assumed, in this Elite/Mass model, that the small elite group knows it all and can design and make policy decision on behalf of the masses that are ill – informed. Grindle and Thomas (1991:19) state that in this model, "policy elites are formally charged with making authoritative decisions in government and because they have considerable scope, they can ably identify problems, articulate goals, define solutions and think strategically about their implementation." This elite/Mass model works in particular context. In cases where the masses are perceived to be illiterate, the policy elites assume that they (the masses) cannot contribute any beneficial or fruitful ideas towards the policy that is being made. The policy elites just tell the masses what policy they think will work and the public just listen. In some cases, political environment dictate the utilization of this elite/Mass model. Where elites, after being put into power through elections, or interviews or group consensus, feel that this was so because they know more than the masses they start deciding on policies on behalf of the masses. They assume that the public mandated them to determine and implement policy programs. De Coning (1995:137) states that this policy model emphasizes the top-down flow of policy decisions that are mostly executed bureaucratically. Weber (1968:225) calls this type of bureaucratic as a means of dominating the people through knowledge.

This model can be seen being applied in Malawi in a number of policies. This is so because of the historical undemocratic rule that the country experienced during the 30 years rule of the previous president – Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. During the one party rule, all the authority to make policies was invested in the elites and nobody questioned or gave input to what the government had decided to do. A good example is how the Language policy was made in 1968. That time, the elites had decided "Chichewa language was to be taught in all schools as a national language". This was communicated through circulars, presidential directive speech during public meetings and state radio announcements. Everybody just took the directives. During the Banda regime, directives from the state president and other high – ranking government officials constituted language education policy. This worked at that time. However, when the new democratic dispensations came, calls for review of the language education policy started coming up strongly during pro-democracy campaigns of 1992-1994. After two years into the multiparty dispensation, the elites tried to use this model to introduce the "mother tongue" language policy. This was in 1996. The government, through the secretary of Education issued a circular letter that was worded,

> *"The Ministry of Education would like to inform all addressees that with immediate effect, all standards 1,2,3 and 4 in all our schools be taught in their own mother or vernacular language as a medium of instruction. English and Chichewa will however continue to be offered as subjects in the primary curricular. In the past Chichewa was used as both a medium of instruction and subject, making it very difficult for beginners to grasp ideas. However, English will be used as a medium of instructions beginning in standard 5. You may wish to know that research has revealed that school children learn better and faster if they are taught in their own vernacular language during the first 4 years of*

their formal education than when they are taught in a second language as a medium of instruction. It is for this reason that this policy is being instituted."

This directive received mixed reaction that prompted the Ministry of Education to try to clarify the policy and later on put on hold the policy to allow for research and wider consultation. Up to now this policy has not yet been fully implemented. The above given example has highlighted how this Elite / Mass model cannot work in democratic institutions or government. Since the language policy failed to deliver the intended results using the elite/mass model, the paper will not focus on this model for the research study but look at alternative models that can work.

Functional Process Model

This model focuses on the how and who aspects. When a policy is being formulated or implemented, in this model, it is always imperative to know who decided and how the decision was made. In case where alternative policies are being considered, this model follows each step by questioning how the alternatives were considered, who was involved. All policy activities are followed up in terms of flow (scheduling) and timing, starting from problem formulation to solutions being developed and implemented. There is need to have frameworks on explaining the functions of each process. Lack of such explanations on the frameworks can lead to disastrous results when one is implementing a particular policy. The situation is aggravated when outside factors have some influence on the policy. Besides the above factors, when policies are being copied from other countries or imposed on a particular country, i.e. as was the case with the language policy, this model can not be utilized as they do not include the "how" aspect. The policy on community participation too

does not have clear explanations on who and how aspects. This, therefore, makes it impossible to utilize the functional process model.

The Systems Model

De Coning (1995:140) while quoting Wissink etal, links this model to the idea of a political system as it responds to the demands and needs of interest groups. He further equates demands to inputs which, through political process – inter alia, political debates, cabinet memoranda, proposals, counter proposals as well as consensus, are processed and analyzed to lead to an agreement which is called policy. One of the disadvantages of this systems model is that it does not know how the inputs are transformed into the outputs as much as it is able to identify major sub-systems and processes in the policy process.

The other fact worthy mentioning about this systems model is that it presents linear and sequential type of process that, in everyday life or any real life situation, is not possible. For example, policy inputs might not necessarily lead to policy outputs through policy conversion as there might be need to go back to the drawing board i.e. (look at demands and resources, support) before the policy conversion could take place. There is a lot of to and fro movement between policy inputs and policy conversion. This again has not been utilized in the "community participation in the management of primary school education policy" that the Ministry of Education in Malawi is trying to implement. Due to environment (political etc.), time and availability of resources, this model can be an uphill task to utilize.

The Institutional Model

De Coning (1995:142) cites Henry (1992:290) who describes "the institutional model as a traditional institutionalist model which focuses on the organization chart of government and describes the arrangements, but customarily ignores the linkages between such units." This model explains the various roles of the organization and inter-organizational processes in policy implementation process. This model emphasizes the fact that the structure of government institutions underpins the policy results since only the government legitimizes public policy. If the above statement is true, then it is important to realize that organization itself has a great bearing to any policy implementation process. Organization power relationship should thus be critically analyzed for there is the belief that only those in power or with authority can make any tangible changes in the society, organization or country. Where the institutional arrangements are not in harmony, institutional model process would not work. Things like working relationships, political stability of principal actors, and bureaucracy, are worthy taking into account and evaluated to see how they affect decision-making process.

Understanding behavior patterns of different public institutions like legislature versus executive and how this affects policy-making process needs to be looked at when dealing with this institutional model.

Institutional models approach, however, not only seeks harmony amongst key players i.e. various institutions, organizations and legislature, and other interest groups using the give and take method (bargaining) but also effective and efficient administration by the personnel manning the whole process.

This, community participation policy has to do with institutions and the governance of such institutions. Therefore, makes this model ideal to be utilized in assessing the institutional arrangements (poor or no capacity, weak or ill prepared human resource) at the community level as well as governance.

Dunn's Model and Wissink's Stage Model

Dunn's policy-making model is one model that is the simplest, internationally and widely used model. The model has the following policy making stages:- agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation and policy assessment. Some policy analysts in South Africa like De Coning (1995: 155) who quotes Wissink (1991:32) after critically analyzing the model thought that there are some stages that need to be added.

Fox, Schwella and Wissink (1991:32), state that during policy-making, the first stage should be "policy initiation" instead of agenda setting. The reason behind this is to show that policy-making process does not begin with agenda setting but rather policy initiation. Wissink etal also point out that policy models must include resources allocation as part of designing and initiating a programme of action (implementation). Another element that is included is the adjudication that involves enforcing the policy through administrative and legal means before impact evaluation and feedback.

What is also important to note is the assumption that any particular policy may go through one or more stages at one time, or may move back and forth between stages rather that progressing through the stages in a sequential manner (De Coning 1995:156). It is therefore probably better to look at community participation in improvement of education policy

while taking into account the suggested additional stages that Fox, Schwella, Wissink and De Coning have made rather than utilizing Dunn's Model.

Generic Model

After looking at all the models mentioned above, and considering the study of community participation in primary school management education policy in Malawi, the analysis of the research findings in this study will focus on the Generic Model that the South Africa authors have developed. According to De Coning (1995:164), the generic model "provides for both a comprehensive set of phases while also proposing that specific requirements and key issues be addressed during each of the phases". The generic model acknowledges and adopts some of the famous widely used model of Dunn but introduces new phases and information on what exactly happens at each stage. Such phases in the generic model include, policy initiation, policy process design, policy analysis, policy formulation, policy decision, policy dialogue, **policy implementation (strategy)** and monitoring and Evaluation.

Why the Generic Model

Malawi enjoyed its first democratic rule in 1994 after thirty years of autocratic rule. One of the slogans that the multiparty democracy campaigners used during their rallies was "give power to the people". This led to a number of consultations, discussions on various social policy issues. Anything done to the contrary produced a lot of outcries and resentment. The generic model emphasizes consultation during the stages that is why it suits Malawi.

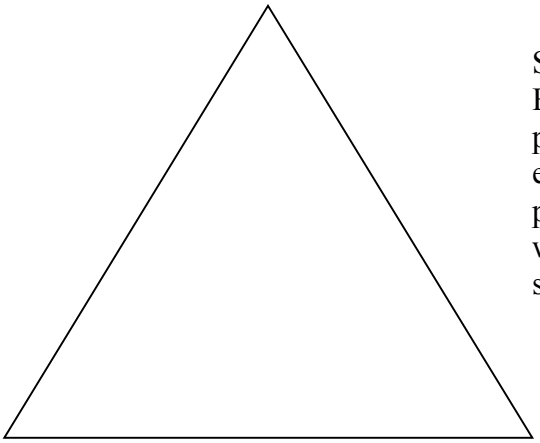
Transparency and accountability are some of the factors that the "new government" advocates. A number of organizations were put in place to make the government transparent and accountable. Every action that the government was about to take was communicated to the community and other stakeholders including donors. The "new multiparty government" aimed at reversing the previous regime autocratic rule that took people as "subjects that were to be told what to do" rather than partners in development where the people had to participate in whatever the government wanted to do. The policies that the government formulated aimed at ensuring that the communities participated actively in development activities. This includes the community participation in primary school management education policy. The stated factors make generic model to be more appropriate to Malawi situation. However, concentration will be on **policy implementation.**

Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle Model

Moore (1995) states that public managers create value hence they need to be accountable. This could be applied to the school management institutions. As these institutions become accountable, they need to have proper vision of public value. This is only possible when the committee members and the schools they lead are efficient and effective. One- way of achieving this is by utilizing the cooperate strategy that the private sector uses in order to guide, create and sustain value to the institution.

Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle model is best presented in diagram 3 below.

Diagram 3: Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle Model



Substantive Value-The Ministry of Education formulated the community participation policy to address educational needs and value of parents and Malawi society as a whole through the same established school management institutions

Operational and Administrative Feasibility – The School Management Institutions have support from various stakeholders and donors

Legitimacy and political sustainability– The school committee & PTA are mandated to implement the policy; they are there in all the schools

Moore's model emphasizes the need to address the substantive value of clients. Substantive value means the School Management Committees and Parents Teachers Associations should ensure that they have the capacity to produce things of value to clients and beneficiaries at low cost in terms of money and authority. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in Southern Africa Development Coordination Countries hence needs to address the needs of the society at low cost, within its small budget and authority (as there are few capacitated personnel).

Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle Model will be utilized to analyze the institutional frameworks in line with community participation in improving education quality. As can be seen, poor or lack of proper institutional frameworks would lead to poor implementation of a particular policy.

2.2.8 ***Atkins Theory on Community Participation***

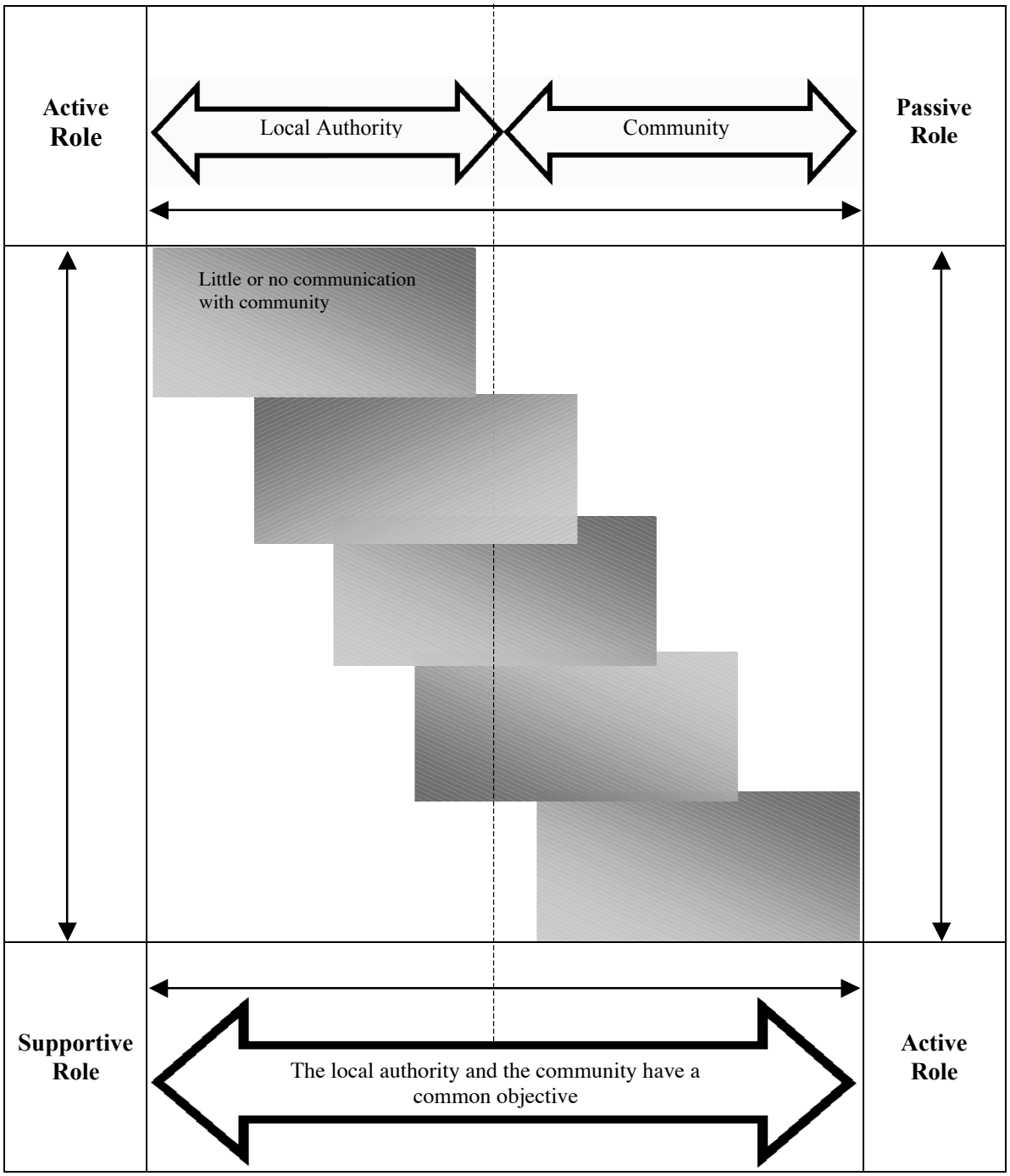
Atkins (1995:) states that community participation requires continuous interaction. The interaction between client/community should be looked at critically. The client/community must be regarded as user – consumer; resource and socio-cultural entity.

There is need that there be continuous interaction between project promoters and funders; and also between the professionals and other service providers for specific inputs, as and when required. The public at large, as the ultimate funder, through its representative institutions and organizations (media etc.), need to be consulted continuously. The same public at large is to adopt a supportive though not an uncritical role, in recognition of the common good being pursued.

Atkins represented this in a diagram form (see diagram 4)

From diagram 4 it can be noted that where there is little or no communication with community, the communities become very passive and it is the local authority (institutions) that have to carry all the burdens. Communication and interaction with communities by the various institutions lead into both the institution and the community having a common objective, which can be pursued together. The institutions playing a supportive role while the communities take an active role.

Diagram 4: Levels of Community Participation



Source Atkins 1995

Atkins theory could easily be applied to the school management institutions. Where there is no or little communication with community, the community will play a passive role and only the school management institutions will be active. As the communities become empowered and are able to initiate action, the school management institutions play the supportive role while the community becomes very active. This is the ideal situation. However, there are many challenges that hinder such a situation to flourish in many Malawian schools.

Since the study is designed to find out the current levels of community participation in the primary schools in Malawi, reasons that have contributed to the low or lack of community participation despite the instituted to facilitate community participation, it is ideal to look at community participation in school management process in Malawi, the process followed in achieving it and the challenges faced.

2.2.9 **The need for community participation:**

Many reasons have been cited by various authors regarding the importance of communities participating in the management of primary schools. In developed countries, it has been conclusively stated that community participation in the management of schools has a lot of financial, political and social benefits. These benefits include: -

- Ownership of the schools by communities thereby empowering them to manage the schools according to the way they think education will benefit their children and society as a whole.

- Ability by the communities to financially and materially support the schools thereby lessening the financial burden on the part of the government's public expenditure on social services like education.

- Schools becoming environments where democracy is practiced. This allows all the social entities, poor or rich and all the marginalized groups, to participate in the affairs of the school.

The above reasons and many more, made the government of Malawi to decide to come up with the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy in order to deal with the high primary school pupil enrolment figures of about 3 million and high repetition and dropout rates that have placed huge strains on education system leading to poor quality education. This policy was however, built on the phenomena that

> "To get real participation, bureaucratic structures and processes need to be changed; decision-makers have to rethink their roles; community institutions need to be strengthened and community members need to be assisted and supported," USAID (1999:10).

However, some of the big challenges that this National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management policy faces are:

- Lack of clear definition of what a "community" is

- Undefined perceptions of communities on "community participation" so that relevant areas and strategies on capacity building for communities can be devised.

- Lack of clear defined criteria for categorizing one community or school management body as active or inactive when it comes to community participation in school management and

- Lack of clear documented materials on the effect of governance on community participation in primary school management and the challenges faced by Malawian communities in community participation and management of schools.

One thing encouraging though is that there are a number of donors or developing partners like the "Department for International Development (DFID) and United States for International Development (USAID) etc. that are committed to ensuring that the government of Malawi achieves community participation in the management of primary schools. This has been demonstrated through the provision of funding and technical expertise towards the development and production of the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy as well as the Policy Investment Framework document. They have also funded programs that aim at mobilizing communities so that they participate in the management of primary schools.

In both instances where these donors have given assistance, community participation has been emphasized in order for Malawi to achieve educational quality. The Policy Investment Framework document (PIF) 1995 – 2005; (2002:2) states it is very important that communities should participate in the management of schools. The National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy (2003) is an initiative by the government of Malawi aimed at achieving sustainable community participation in the management of schools.

The assistance provided to enhance community participation is supposed to lead to improved quality education but literature states that on the ground things are different. It is stated that there is "low or lack" of community participation in education. Probably it is better to look at what could be the possible causes that hinder community participation.

2.3 Some of the Factors that Facilitate or Hinder Sustainable Community Participation in School Management Process

Gilbert and Tounkana (2000:10) state that community participation in Coate d'Ivoire and Gambia is seriously hampered by poverty, illiteracy, lack of jobs for graduates and ignorance of the concept of free school. In Benin, as reported by Salami and Kpamegan (2000:5), the following factors impede community participation: Economic, Demographic, Socio-cultural, Religious or Institutional.

Knowing that community participation in education is a policy that the government of Malawi and other donor agencies like the World Bank are advocating, some policy models outlined earlier on and the theory concepts that follow will be utilized in order to shed more light as to why may be communities do not effectively participate in school management process.

2.3.1 *Social Capital*

The other factor worthy consideration that has been highlighted by other authors like Putnam (2000) and Fukuyama (1999) is the social capital. They explain that all forms of traditional culture –social groups like: tribes, clans, village associations, religious sects etc. are based on shared norms to achieve cooperative ends. From the literature, a number of authors say that all groups embodying social capital that have a narrow radius of trust end up being a liability when it comes to development. This in the end would entail low or no community participation. Principally, a group of people possessing no social capital would end up paying more in terms of labour, time, finance etc. when it comes to monitoring, negotiating, litigating and enforcing agreements.

Putnam (2000:41) makes a very outstanding revelation when he states that there is considerable evidence that communities, with a good `stock' of social capital, are more likely to benefit from lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement, and better economic growth. This means social capital can play a very vital role when it comes to community participation in the improvement of education.

However, it is also a fact that groups or organizations with high social capital can work to exclude and subordinate others. Putnam (2000:69) also makes this statement that is very relevant to community participation in improving education. He states,

> "Social Capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily …… people often might be better off if they cooperate, with each doing his/her share. Social capital greases the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly as people are trusting and trustworthy. Active and trusting connections to others develop or maintain character traits that are good for the rest of the society."

From the aforesaid discussion it can thus be seen that social capital has a bearing on community participation in education. The World Bank has brought together a range of statistics to make the case for the social and economic benefits of social capital including education.

2.3.2 ***Governance***

Lastly, it is important to consider the issues of governance and how it affects community participation. Community participation has been closely linked with governance. Hyden (1992:188) quotes World Bank as saying

> "poor governance which means extensive personalization of power, the denial of fundamental human rights, wider spread corruption and prevalence of un elected and unaccountable government would lead to lack of participation."

Landell Mills and Serageldin (1991:15-16) mention the following things that foster governance: accountability, freedom of association and participation, sound judicial system, bureaucratic accountability, freedom of information and expression: capacity building and the different roles of external agencies. Since community participation is about empowerment, let it be mentioned that empowerment neither will nor assure better governance unless the responsible public agencies are competent. There is need for technical management and acquisition of skills.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Sustainable community participation is acknowledged to be pivotal to the success of any development endeavor including primary education. Lack of proper definition of sustainable community participation could easily lead to making wrong strategies and conclusions when assessing the levels of community participation. There are many factors that foster or impinge the participation of communities in improving education quality. These range from institution and institutional arrangements, social capital and governance just to mention a few. It is thus important to look at the policy models and theories and apply them to the research findings of the study that has been done. From the literature it can be stated that in Malawi as well as other African countries there are some factors that do hinder community participation in a number of activities that are aimed at improving education quality. However, there is need to find out levels of community participation in Malawi, people's perceptions on what they think they could effectively participate in school management and their

potential while looking at the policy on community participation in management of primary schools.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction:

This chapter will outline the research methodology that was used in this study. It will also explain the rationale for utilizing the selected methodologies; tools and interview design. There will also be a discussion on data analysis.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized in gathering information that informs this study. Qualitative methodology was utilized because, as defined by Leedy (1993), it focuses on how things are occurring at the point of origin i.e. field. Since qualitative approaches allow for social interaction with people, it helps in understanding how are things happening; what causes such happenings and why are they happening in that way.

Neuman (1997:73) states that qualitative approach, by using various methods, helps in getting the inside picture of how others see the world. Qualitative approach methods are more concerned with achieving emphatic understanding of feelings and world-views. The study is about getting communities' perception on their participation in school management hence the selection of the qualitative approach. The aim of this study is to analyze the community participation, a case that is being pursued in the NSCPPSM document. As pointed out by Badenhorst (2003:7) that "the goal of a researcher using this qualitative method is to reconstruct and analyze a "local" case, policy or example," and this study is just aiming at that! Qualitative approach also provides rich, deep data from each respondent. This allows for a deeper and clear understanding of the subject being studied.

However, the quantitative approach was also utilized in the research to gather information to inform this study. The aim is to prescribe a standard that can objectively and generally be applied to the Malawian society when it comes to

community participation. It would be possible to explain the causes of various communities participating in the activities that they are currently participating in. Quantitative data, in this study, has also been used to measure the frequency and number of community members that participated in various school management activities and the percentage of the community that felt could participate in a particular role.

3.1 Data Collection:

a) Secondary data

Secondary data, at times referred to as literature survey, were collected from documents, books, journals, magazines on community participation in school management, Newsletters, Newspapers and reports from organizations that implemented projects on education and community participation. The information was obtained from the Witwatersrand Library of Management, University of Malawi Library, Bunda College of Agriculture Library in Malawi, The British Library and United States Information Service Centre. Latest literature on community participation was also found on the inter-net.

It was from these literature searches that the following research questions emerged which formed part of the areas that primary data was to cover i.e.

- What are the perceptions of the community in Malawi regarding community participation in school management process?

- Does the availability/active or non-availability /non-action of school management committees any effect on community participation?

- Has governance any effect on community participation?

- What are the challenges for the community to participate in management of the schools?

b) Primary Data

Primary data was collected in order to try to get more in-depth information on the research questions raised earlier on. Several methods including individual interviews, Focus Group Discussions and observation were utilized. Structured and semi structured questionnaires were used in individual interviews and Focus Group Discussion, respectively. These methods also enabled the researcher to observe what the subjects actually did in line with the subject under study.

The questions were structured in order to collect information on:

- What school activities have the communities ever participated in and what other activities do they perceive they could also participate in.

- The decision making process followed at their school when they are deciding what is to be done i.e. electing school committee members etc.

- The different roles of school management bodies as perceived by the community.

- The communities' perception on community participation.

Five categories of key target groups that were interviewed comprised:

- **Community leaders** – they are the ones that are responsible for requesting a school to be opened in their area.

- **School management committee members** – these are the school governing bodies elected at each school in order to manage the schools, including ensuring community participation.

- **Parents Teacher Association Members (PTA)** – the PTA members are the ones responsible for checking the progress of pupils learning at school, mobilizing communities and holding the school management committee to account.

- **Teachers** – the government official responsible for teaching pupils and managing the school environment.

- **Pupils** – the children who are to obtain education at the schools.

c) <u>Survey sampling and study sites</u>

A simple random sampling procedure was utilized in conducting the research in Ulongwe Zone of Balaka district, one of the education districts in Malawi. As Moore (1997:368) states, "random phenomena are not haphazard or chaotic any more than random sampling is haphazard" hence a list of all schools from the zone was produced from where a sample was drawn. According to Mulder, "a sample is a group, that is selected from the population and is thus less than a population" (Mulder, 1992:55).

This zone has twenty-six primary schools of which ten are Junior Primary Schools and sixteen Full Primary Schools. The list of schools is attached as *appendix 2.* Utilizing simple random sampling process, two Full Primary Schools i.e. Namalomba and Mzimundilinde: and one Junior Primary School i.e. Mbavi were chosen.

A total of 31 respondents (male and female) responded to a structured questionnaire (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of people interviewed using questionnaire

Name of the School	No. of Community Leaders	No. of SMC Members	No. of PTA Members	No. of Parents	No. of Teachers	No. of Pupils	Total
Namalomba FP	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
Mzimundilinde F.P.	1	1	-	1	2	2	7
Mbavu J.P	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
Total	**5**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**31**

It should be pointed out that 29% of the respondents were female.

Sixty-five (65) respondents (Table 2) were interviewed in five focus group discussions.

Table 2: Number of people participated in Focus Group Discussion

Target Group	No. of People		Total
	Male	*Female*	
Community Leaders	9	-	9
No. of SMC/PTA Members	5	4	9
Parents	12	10	22
Teachers	6	4	10
Pupils	7	8	15
Total	**39**	**26**	**65**

d) Actual Field Research Process:

Prior to the main research, the data collection instruments were pre tested. The questionnaires were then reviewed and revised accordingly. The researcher conducted the interviews personally. The interviews took one month and a half to complete i.e. June and part of July 2004. Apart from administering the questionnaires, the researcher observed some education meetings that were conducted by the community leaders, school management committees and teachers. Visits to the research sites also gave the researcher an opportunity to see what type of activities the communities had actually done at their respective schools. This helped in checking and verifying the data that the respondents were giving during interviews.

Some data analysis was being done while the information was being collected. This enabled the researcher to focus and shape the study as

it proceeded. Information collected each day was always synthesized in order to make sure that it was addressing the research questions or themes. Wherever gaps were noted, the researcher sought clarification from the respondents each time he went to the field. The researcher also taped all the proceedings that took place during Focus Group Discussions. The above-mentioned strategies assisted greatly during the analysis stage.

Table 3 gives a summary of the information that was solicited from the respondents.

Table 3: Information Solicited from Respondents

Part	Community Leaders	Pupils	School Committee Members	PTA Members	Teachers
School activities participated by community	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decision making process on school issues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Perception of community on what school activities they could participate in.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Definition of community participation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The researcher read out questions to the respondents and in most cases expanded the questions for clarification so that the interviewee could give in-depth rich answers that were relevant to the theme.

3.2 Data Analysis

As stated by Kerlinger (1986:19) "to display the data is certainly important, but it is the interpretation of the data that is Sine qua non of the research." Representing data in the most useful and meaningful way that easily communicates to people is what Werbeloff (1996:16) refers to as data analysis.

Mass data that were collected along the following main themes: activities participated in, decision-making process, roles of school bodies, and perceptions of the community on their participation in managing schools were summarized. The summary was based on the type of respondents in terms of their grouping and gender. Each group's views were set separately and later on compared against each other in order to check the emerging picture i.e. patterns, conformity, conflicts on the themes of the study. Patterns of variables involving similarities and differences amongst the defined categories were also taken into account.

In case where quantitative data were obtained, they were analyzed using SPSS version 12 into variable frequencies etc. and for qualitative data, the content analysis as defined by Honcock, (2002:17) was utilized. The latter involved classification, summarization and tabulation of the behavioural data of the various target groups that comprised Community Leaders, School Management Committees, Parents Teachers Association Members, Parents, Teachers and Pupils.

Later the analyzed data were compared to the theory on community participation for convergence and divergence. Arising from the research findings, a conclusion was drawn and recommendations made on how best the government could ensure sustainable community participation in the management of the schools.

3.3 **Some possible limitations in the study:**

3.3.1 ***Reliability:***

Werbeloff (1996:11) states that reliability criterion is necessary for it ensures that the results obtained on a certain occasion, under certain conditions are reproducible. What this entails is that if one went out to interview the same respondent, on the same subject, under the same conditions would obtain the same results time and again. As much as reliability is difficult to get when one utilizes qualitative method, the researcher tried to achieve this by asking each respondent in the sample the same set of questions that were adequately worded according to the themes. Pre-testing of the questionnaires also assisted in shelving out any differences that could arise due to different understandings by the respondents and avoid poorly defined terms. Attempts were made by the researcher to find wording for questions that had consistent meaning across the entire population. Probing for more detailed information was done where the respondents seemed not to understand the questions.

3.3.2 ***Validity:***

Werbeloff (1996:12) states "validity criterion is necessary to ensure that the results of the questionnaire really refer to the construct or trait intended to be measured." She further states that there are three kinds of validity namely: - content, criterion and construct. The researcher made sure that

each question formulated had a direct bearing to the themes of the study and they were asked in a progressive manner so that the next question asked built on the preceded question. The questionnaire followed a logical sequence.

3.3.3 ***Representativity:***

It is very difficult to conduct qualitative research with a very large sample hence it can easily suffer representativity. In order to circumvent this shortfall, the researcher interviewed varying key informants i.e. the community leaders, the school management committee members, the PTA members, the parents, the teachers and the pupils. The sample was thus fairly representative. This was even fortified by the focus group discussions that were held with the target groups.

3.3.4 ***Neutrality:***

The researcher's main occupation has been on encouraging communities to participate in any social development endevours that would uplift their lives. It was therefore quite difficult to be neutral thereby agreeing with what Lindblom and Woodlouse (1993:34) stated: "(at no point can) the thinking, researcher and action (be) objective or unbiased. It is partisan through and through (like) all human activities." However, the researcher deliberately made efforts to listen objectively, carefully and tentatively to what the respondents were stating on the themes that were highlighted in each question.

3.4 **Limitations and recommendations for the future studies:**

A more and wider research could have been ideal so as to be more representative of the country. However, the researcher was constrained by

transport, time, and cost. It is therefore being recommended that another research be carried out covering a wider geographical area knowing that Malawi has a diverse of communities with different geographical, socio-economical and political backgrounds.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated the methodology utilized to gather and analyze the information that the study utilized. Possible limitations and how they were dealt with have also been highlighted. The next chapter will provide the actual information that was gathered from the field.

CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will first of all give the historical background of community participation in Malawi tracing it as far back as 1962 education act up to the current Malawi government policy on community participation in school management process, the process followed to achieving this policy and the challenges faced. Areas where communities from other countries have participated in regarding the management of their schools will also be highlighted. This will be followed by the research findings on community participation.

4.1 Background to Community Participation in School Management:

For the comprehensive analysis of sustainable community participation to be fully understood, it is ideal to provide a brief background of community participation in school management. The overview will give the socio-economic and political environment within which community participation in management of schools in Malawi is being undertaken.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in Southern Africa Region with a rapid population growth that has risen from 2 million in 1964 when Malawi achieved its independence from Britain to approximately10.5 million in 2003. Governments' trust to educate its populace dates way back to 1964 but had little funding.

> "At the time of independence there were very few primary schools which were mostly owned by government and church organizations. This led to the country having the following categories of primary schools: "government schools", "government assisted schools" and "unassisted schools." The

schools that were termed "government schools" belonged to Local Education Authority and were directly supervised and managed by the government. Government assisted schools implies that the government of Malawi supported the schools through the provision of teachers, teaching and learning resources and other services and facilities including supervision and inspection. The "unassisted" schools were solely operated and managed by the community and the Church NGO. These unassisted schools mostly supported by church organizations had their teachers' salary paid from school fees and collections from the community. The school fees paid in both unassisted, and government assisted and government schools were also utilized in purchasing writing and reading materials." (Chaturvedi, 1994:23 – 24)

The Government of Malawi put in place a policy that aimed at enabling the school management committees to assist in the management of the schools.

4.2 Government of Malawi Policy on Community Participation in Managing Primary Schools.

The Ministry of Education has put in place a number of policies and strategies in order to ensure that communities are involved in the management of the primary schools. Ministry of Education Policy (2002:14) states that according to 1962 Education Act, the School Management Committees (SMC'S) and the Parents Teachers Associations (PTA's) are responsible for ensuring community participation in managing primary schools. However, the Policy Investment Framework 1995 to 2005 document (2002:3) is very explicit in stating that there has not been much involvement of communities in managing the primary schools hence calls for community mobilization campaigns. It is probably best to look at

the institutions available that are responsible for school management and their roles first as stipulated in the 1962 Education Act.

4.3 The School Management Institutions

4.3.1 *The School Management Committees (SMC)*

The government of Malawi, through the Education Parliamentary Act (1962) instituted the school management committees at every school in order to ensure that communities participated in the management of their schools. According to the 1962 Education Act, the school management committees are the governing bodies that are elected at each and every school to manage schools. These bodies comprise nine members plus one Parents Teacher Association chairperson. The school committee members are to be elected by parents and community leaders under the supervision of a primary education advisor and agency representative. These SMC's are to meet regularly to basically address school issues such as infrastructure, teacher performance, teacher discipline, school-fund, quality teaching, absenteeism of both pupils and teachers and any other issues as they affect the daily running of the schools. The school committee members' tenure of office is one year.

4.3.2 *The Parents Teachers Association (PTA)*

Just like the school committees, the PTA's are to be elected at each school. On the composition of the PTA, unlike the school committee, the PTA is made up of all parents, all teachers and all community leaders that have their children at school. The executive comprises nine members who are elected by the community under the very supervision of the Primary Education Advisor (PEA) and the school agency representative. The PTA is to meet three or four times in a year to discuss the progress of pupils

that are learning at the school, mobilize communities and hold the school committee to account. The PTA's tenure of office is also one year.

However, questions concerning these institutions arise concerning their existence functionality, and challenges faced. Are the institutions outlined above i.e. the School Management Committee and the Parent Teachers Association existing and functional in order to conclude that communities in Malawi participate in the management of their primary schools? What is the challenge that the government of Malawi faces?

4.4 The Challenge Faced by Government of Malawi on Community Participation in Primary Schools

A number of authors, for example, Creative Associates International (1994:2) through their research findings, have reported low or no community participation in the school management process despite the presence of school management committees. The school management committees were unable to fulfill all the above stated roles such that there was no real meaningful education development at the schools due to a number of challenges (NSCPPSM Document 2003:4). Communities did not participate fully in the education of their children. What they were mostly concerned with was the payment of school fees and nothing else. Lack of incorporation of the Parent Teachers' Association (PTA), who are mandated to mobilize communities and hold school management committees into account, into the education act coupled with "the autocratic rule of hero praising," (Grandvaux, Welmond and Wolf 2002:3) resulted into the government trying to do everything for the people,

This made the communities to be very dormant and be reduced into a state of helplessness i.e. just waiting to receive and being told what to do. Their

role was reduced to enforcement of school fees, school uniform for pupils, and raising school funds.

As more and more pupils got enrolled in schools, the government's budget became overstretched and therefore found it necessary to involve communities in some of the social services that were made available to the community. In the early 1970's the government of Malawi introduced "youth week" with the aim of instilling "self-help spirit" in the youths and the communities as a whole. The school management committees and the communities participated in construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructures such as school blocks, teachers' houses, pit latrines, desks, roads etc. during the youth week. However, the communities still heavily relied on government's provision of materials when it came to educating their children.

> "The government could not cope up with this huge task of educating all the school-going age such that by 1993 about 50% of the school-going age children were outside the formal school system of education due to long distance to schools, poor parental attitudes and practices towards girls' education, lack of school infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials, among many other reasons," (Chaturvedi, 1994:26).

This was despite the waiver of tuition for standards 1 – 3 and all girls that did not repeat any class. One thing that also contributed to the communities and school committees not participating effectively in the management of the schools is a conspicuous demarcation line that existed between the teachers and the community. The two groups had each a "class" of its own. The teachers were looked upon by the communities as "untouchables," "intelligent" and "know it all" while the teachers looked down upon communities as "the know nothing" that need to be told and

guided always. To segment this paralysis was the fact that school management committee were trained or briefed on their roles by the head teacher or teachers. Limited interaction between parents/communities and schools, and weak Parents Teachers' Association worsened the situation.

In 1994, after the first multiparty general elections, free primary education was introduced.

> "After eliminating school fees, access to education increased dramatically, (over 3 million pupils were enrolled in schools) although direct and indirect costs of schooling continue to be prohibitive for the poorest families and the expansion of primary education is generally believed to have occurred at the expense of quality," (Grandvaux, Welmond and Wolf 2002:4).

This situation was aggravated by the fact that during multiparty campaign rallies, the pro-multiparty groups branded any self-help (community participation) work as "Thangata" (slavery) and promised liberty if the people elected them into power. However, soon after introduction of free-primary education, the center could not hold and as such the politicians had to rescind those campaign messages. The donors stepped up their funding towards mobilizing communities in order for them to take part in improving education at their school. James and Kakatera (2002:17) state that many of the donor funded projects have aimed at building community participation and strengthening the roles of the school management bodies to be more effective and they have achieved some success. The communities too realized the need for them to do something as they saw for themselves the quality of education dwindling as one parent stated during focus group discussions.

> "You see, do you think we would just sit idle and watch our children fail to read or write even our vernacular language by standard three, let alone English by standard five? No! We realized that these politicians were just cheating us when they said we would no longer be involved in self-help projects after multiparty," Mr. Adbul Jaidi stated.

This was echoed by Robb and Kaunda (1999:4), who reported that "after the Social Mobilization Campaigns, once again the communities took up their tools and started assisting the government in constructing shelters, school blocks, and bridges; encouraged their children not to be absent from school etc. to enable their child have effective learning. Teachers' too gave extra-lessons to those pupils that were lagging behind."

When Malawi Primary Community Schools Programme was initiated, a number of actors/stakeholders embarked on training the School Management Committees on their statutory roles as laid down by the government and on their leadership roles in community when it came to development projects (Malawi Primary Community Schools Programme 1999:11).

4.5 **Budgetary Implications:**

Even though many stakeholders embarked on revitalizing the school management committees, things still did not improve as reported in NSCPPSM (2004:4) document,

> "The role of SMC's is still predominantly one of organizing the maintenance of school infrastructure and that there is very little participation from communities ……." "Despite some notable examples of high level of involvement by communities,

> participation in most schools is still superficial, partly because of past models of involvement; from lack of exposure to other influential models and because of resistance from teachers themselves who want communities to contribute labour and funds but not interfere in school management."

The continuous rise in education budget can be stopped if communities took a very active role in basic education as expressed by James and Kakatera, (2000:5).

> "Government of Malawi's main policy is to alleviate poverty with education as its center piece and thus prioritized spending in this sector. Between 1980 and 1990, educational spending in the national recurrent budget averaged 10%. By 1996/7 it had gone up to 26% and 1997/8 it also went up to 28%. During the multiparty era education the budget for basic education alone went up from 49% in 1993/4 to 62% in 1997. Basic education is where the communities can have a significant influence in the reduction of budgetary allocations if they fully participated in the Management of schools. For example, 75% of Malawi's primary schools have been built by community support."

In 1997 the classroom ratio was 127:1 meaning there was need for 38,000 classrooms more. The enormous deficit meant many children, particularly in the in the lower standards, were learning out side under the shade of trees. When there were rains, there were no classes.

However, according to the National Economic Council of Malawi, Vision 2020, (2000:2005), there is great potential for active community participation in development of education. There are some contributions made by communities towards improving basic education only that very

little documentation is available. This is evidenced by what transpired during a discussion with one of the CRECCOM officials who stated that during social mobilization campaign for education quality they tried to cost community contribution towards improving educational quality and came up with 92,200 Million Kwacha (approximately 1.152 million US Dollars) from the 16 districts they operated in. This figure could be very high if all communities cost their contribution towards improvement of education quality. For details of what they contributed *see appendix I*.

4.6 Governance and Community Participation:

As previously stated, under the one party-era, the government instituted a policy of "self-help" where communities were expected to contribute. The contribution was to be in form of labour to projects that affected them such as road maintenance. This worked until the multiparty democracy, as stated by James and Kakatera (200:16), "when free primary education was introduced, however, the way it was introduced to the public, led to much confusion over the meaning of free primary education and to an assumption by communities that schooling is now purely the responsibility of the government and not theirs." Politicians capitalized on the large number of school-going age children not going to school. They stated that it was due to school fees and the inability by the previous regime to provide teaching and learning materials. Communities were promised that the new government that they had ushered in was going to do everything for them. This temporarily killed the spirit of "self-help" (community participation) in the minds of the communities as well as school management committees. An example is where one Member of Parliament in one of the districts in Malawi asked the school management committee to give back the money that the communities had voluntarily contributed towards the construction of pit latrines at their school. He said that was against the new government policy that was going to do

everything for them. What was interesting though is that the government never did construct the pit latrines and the communities had to start again contributing money in order to build pit latrines for their children at the school.

Through the extensive mobilization by non-governmental organizations and donor funding, many communities started to participate in education development endeavors. The government started making rhetoric calls for community ownership of development project even though it was uncertain as to how much power would really be allowed in decision making at community level.

The mobilizations done by these NGOs were basically aiming at fostering empowerment of communities in the issues of education of their children. There are numerous examples of successful mobilization through donor funding cited by James and Kakatera (2000:20) s*ee table 4 below*.

Table 4: Examples of activities done by mobilized communities

• School committees holding monthly meetings
• SMC's and PTA's resolving conflict
• Communities influence change in school timetable to facilitate children's attendance
• Lobbying the Primary Education and District Education Officer for action in certain areas
• School construction and brick moulding
• Parental support for children
• Handling of pupils pregnancies cases

CRECCOM, an NGO that is regarded and quoted by many as being very successful in the area of community mobilization, has a number of case studies showing community mobilization. Two out of the many case studies together with the Matrix table *(appendix 1)* the organization documented as indicators of mobilized communities, are included in this report.

Case Study 1: FUND–RAISING WITH CREATIVITY – CHIKANGAWA

The Setting:

Chikangawa is one of the 18 zones that constitute Mzimba Rural South Education District. The zone is located to the North Eastern corner of the district and has a total of 17 primary schools out of which 12 are full primary schools and 5 are developing schools. The zone lies in the area of Traditional Authority Kampingo Sibande and has a total of 79 villages. The field officials responsible for the zone from the Ministry of Education Human Resource and Development (MOEHRD) and the Ministry of Gender Child Welfare and community services are Mrs. H.F. Shawa (PEA) AND Mrs. R.C. Chunga (SWA) respectively.

The Constraint:

Lack of extra-curricular and sporting activities and lack of incentives for pupils to motivate them and create a competitive spirit among them, remain examples of the factors that have predominantly surfaced as lowering pupils' interest in education. The factors have contributed to rampant rates of dropouts, absenteeism and truancy among pupils.

In an effort to motivate and mobilize communities and schools, the SMC-EQ project provides the School Incentive Packages (SIP) to each school in each project district. The package contains such items as footballs, netballs, badges, bells, foot rulers etc that could be used in various ways at the school. For instance, promotion of sporting and extra curricular activities, serving as awards to pupils to promote a competitive spirit among them etc.

However, the idea behind the provision of the SIP is that it acts as a starter pack, whereby, when communities appreciate the need to continue with the activities and are well mobilized, they seek ways to sustain and maintain it. A School Incentive Package Committee is formed at each school to coordinate the activities related to the SIP. Each school has the onus to devise ways to sustaining their SIP package.

The Solution:

One of the ways that schools and communities have come up with to sustain the SIP is through fundraising. In this regard schools in Chikangawa zone are sustaining their SIP in an innovative and creative way. They are using a tradition that is common in the northern region of Malawi called *"Ndelelita"* or *"Bevu"* (that takes place during a marriage ceremony) to realize funds and items contributed towards the SIP.

At a typical traditional marriage ceremony, there comes a time for "Bevu" or "Ndelelita." During this time, people enter the dance arena and give money to the bride and the groom. At times individuals enter the arena to show off how much they could give while they proudly walk the arena and comment or give advice to the bride and the groom. This climaxes to a point that the bidders who enter the arena compete to show off who is better by giving more money. The gathered audience applauds in the process.

Using the same idea of the cultural practice, a number of schools launched their SIP and raised a good some of money and items long before they even received the packages from CRECCOM. During such launching, a mock wedding is organized where the SIP is assumed to be the bride and the groom. They invite such people as businessmen and company workers as well as parents, community leaders, SIP, PTA and school committee members and pupils to attend the SIP launching ceremonies. A variety of activities such as poems, choirs, and traditional dances are performed on the launching day. During the ceremony, people enter the arena and contribute money and items towards the SIP in a similar manner to that of a traditional wedding ceremony.

Source: CRECCOM – SMC-EQ Final Report (2004)

Case Study 2: CHANYOLI PRIMARY SCHOOL, BOLERO, RUMPHI

The Constraint: Early marriage for school going age girls: Elizabeth Nkhoma eloped with a man (name withheld), and was a housewife for three months some ten km away.

Project Intervention: Sensitization meeting and counseling by SMC-EQ trained school management committee and teachers.

Results: Elizabeth's marriage ends, and returns to school

Elizabeth is active at school. In the picture above, she makes an input during a group discussion

Elizabeth answers a question in class

Elizabeth was never isolated from both teachers and other pupils. She mixed well with her friends. In the picture Elizabeth shares jokes with her friends at break time.

Elizabeth is not the only girl at the school who has benefited from the SMC-EQ Project activities and has returned to school.

Wezzie Chinula, a 16 year-old standard seven pupils who also dropped out of school has returned to school.

Eminess Chavula, a 16 year- old standard eight pupil, has also returned to school after being married for one year.

Besides that, the school management committee is repairing teachers' houses. It is repairing the floors, windows and doorframes. The committee has bought 10 bags of cement and employed a carpenter to do the rehabilitation work. Parents have collected sand for the activity.

In the picture, teachers discuss with school management committee members about one of the teachers' houses being rehabilitated.

"SMC-EQ Project has really boosted our working morale and instilled a sense of responsibility among all of us at Chanyoli. It was never like this in the past," said Mr. Kondwani Nyasulu, the head teacher of the school. "Our enrolment has risen from 364 pupils in January 2003 to 381 pupils in March 2003.

Source: CRECCOM – SMC-EQ Final Report (2004)

It can be concluded from all this is that the importance of community participation in basic education has emerged as a value shared by government and the donor community. There is need for community level advocacy that involves sensitizing communities to the issues of education, mobilizing them to act on their own behalf, ensuring that their power to make decisions at community level is genuine and also enabling them to have a voice at the higher levels of decision making. This is where the Government of Malawi developed the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy. The aim was to move towards sustainable community participation as developed by Pretty (1994) and adapted by the government in its NSCPPSM document (2003:9). *See table 5.*

Table 5: The Ladder of Community Participation

Level of Participation	Type of Participation	Description
Level 6	Self mobilization	People participate by taking initiative independent of external institutions. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used.
Level 5	Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing one. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
Level 4	Functional participation	People participate by being formed into committees, around specific predetermined objectives of the project, for example School Management Committees. Such participation does not tend to be in the early stages of project cycles, but is instead after the major decisions have been made. These committees tend to be dependent on external facilitators but may become self-dependent over time.
	Sustainability	Threshold
Level 3	Participation for material incentives	People participate by providing resources such as labour or materials (e.g. making bricks for school construction) in return for food or cash.
Level 2	Participation in information giving/consultation	People participate by answering questions by researchers and expressing their views. The results are not shared with communities and questioners have no obligation to take on board people's views.
Level 1	Passive participation	People are just told what is going to happen, as an announcement by those administering the project or activity.

Source: NSCPPSM document (2003)

Even after having said all that has been said, the Government of Malawi National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management (NSCPPSM) document (2003:4) makes a shocking revelation when it states that,

> "School Management Committees and Parents Teachers Associations do not exist or if they do, are largely dormant. In addition where School Management Committees do exist, their role is predominantly one of organizing the maintenance of school infrastructure. There is very little participation from communities and parents in other more contentious school management issues such as the monitoring of teacher performance."

A point also worthy noting is that all the above stated documents and the limited literature available do not, however, provide the Malawi's communities' perceptions on what they think they could effectively participate in school management, what they have actually done and why. It is also important to know the areas the communities are potentially capable of participating. Probably community participation in improving educational standards would best be measured against their defined capabilities and abilities rather than the globally set standards. This will be more covered in the section that deals with the research findings.

According to the Malawi scenario, there are very limited areas that the communities seem to have participated when it comes to improving education. It would thus be better to compare Malawi with what communities from other countries have been able to participate in regarding school management.

4.6.1 ***Areas that Communities have been able to Participate in Other Countries***

Gilbert and Tounkana (2000:4) mention the following areas that communities in Coate d'Ivoire and Gambia have been able to participate in: -

- Management of schools through school management committees
- Development of curricula
- Intervening as teachers in areas related to culture
- Supervising and maintaining school property
- Supervising and monitoring students attendance
- Conducting campaigns to recruit students into the schools
- Encouraging teachers to become more effective
- Supervising students at home

One striking thing worthy noting is the featuring of external forces that are involved in this process of community participation. Gilbert and Tounkana (2000:3) state, "community participation is often under the impetus or initiative of participants from outside the communities, especially the government and non-governmental organization." This raises the question as to who belongs to the community. The other things worthy asking are: - how wide is this community participation in the country and should all the above stated areas be implemented by one community at one school before a particular school community can be labeled as one participating in school management process?

Benin too, according to the research conducted by Salami and Kpamegan (2000:4) on the relationship between community participation, access and quality found the same intriguing feature of external participants initiating the community participation process. They stated, however, that the

communities could participate in decision making, implementation of basic education projects in the community, basic education funding, educational process and school management. This raises the question of external participants initiating the community participation. Why are the initiators of community participation regarded by the researchers as external? Does the community regard the initiators as external? Can the so-called "community" do the above activities without the so-called external people? What community members can possibly participate in the management of schools themselves without external influence needs to be explored.

4.6.2 ***Malawi Government stated areas that a Community could participate in.***

The National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy document (2003:21) outlines the following areas where communities should participate in when it comes to school management process.

a) **Planning and Designing**

- Sensitization of communities on their roles and responsibilities so that they are empowered to participate in the management of their schools.

- Needs Assessment and Prioritization done through a thorough understanding and analysis of issues, and with the full participation of all stakeholders so that the most appropriate needs concerning primary school management are prioritized.

- Social contracts negotiated, defined and agreed upon by all stakeholders in the management of the primary school.

- Development of detailed school improvement plans that are agreed upon by all stakeholders for the participation of communities in the management of their primary schools.

- Communities actively participating in the management of their primary schools.

b) **Appraisal**

- Communities, through the school management committees, control funds raised internally or externally for their primary school.

- Adequate quality human, financial and material resources provided and allocated, in accordance with priorities in the school improvement plan.

- Empowering communities to take responsibility for the sustainable management and ownership of their own primary schools.

c) **Implementation:**

- Capacity building of SMC's, PTAs and other stakeholders that carry out school management functions.

- Supervision and monitoring primary school management activities by the community and other stakeholders.

d) **Reflection and Learning**

- Carry out targeted in-depth research into specific topics in order to get deeper understanding of the issues, concerns and future opportunities and directions regarding community participation in primary schools.

- Evaluation of all primary school management activities and results shared to all interested stakeholders.

- Lessons and experiences shared with other stakeholders.

When drawing-up areas of community participation in this NSCPPSM document, it was mentioned that there are some elements that are to be in place first if community participation in primary school management is to proceed effectively. These include: - Effective Institutions, Integration of Gender and HIV/AIDS as a cross cutting theme, coordination and collaboration of activities by all stakeholders, policy review and effective, clear and open communication between all stakeholders involved in primary school management.

4.7 Community participation in school management in Malawi as revealed through field research findings

This section gives an account of the responses of the various key target groups on community and community participation that were obtained through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. It then proceeds to discuss the field research findings that will be the base in conducting an analysis. In addition, a comprehensive analysis of sustainable community participation in school management is made.

The information solicited from these respondents centered around: Definition of community and community participation, school activities participated in by community, the perception of community on what school activities they could participate in and the decision making process on school issues. The following were the findings:

4.7.1 School Catchment Area

The school catchment area comprises, on average, six villages with a population of 6,232. The villages are, in some cases scattered, while in other cases congested together, depending on the geographical size of the area.

The research findings revealed that at every school there is a school management committee which the respondents rated as either very active, active or barely active. As for the Parents Teachers Association, 93.3% of the respondents stated that there was a PTA at their school while only 6.7% stated there was none.

4.7.2 School Management Institutions' activeness

In order to determine the degree of participation, the interviewees were asked to rate the School Management Institutions as very active, or barely active or not active at all. They were also requested to provide reasons for such ratings. Table 6 gives ratings for the School Management Committees and the Parents Teachers Associations.

Table 6: Ratings of the activeness of the school management bodies

School Management Body	**Very Active**		**Active**		**Barely Active**		**Not Active**	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
SMC	21	70	7	23.3	2	6.7	0	0
PTA	13	50	7	26.9	4	15.4	2	7.7

.

As can be seen from Table 6, 93.3% rated the SMCs as either very active or active as compared to 76.9% for the same category for the PTAs. 15.4% rated the PTAs as barely active compared to 6.7% for the same category for the SMCs. None of the respondents rated the School Management Committees as not active. This is not the same case for the Parents Teachers association. It can be concluded from table 6 that the communities perceive the School Management Bodies as active.

When asked for reasons for rating each of the School Management Body either very active, active and barely active the following emerged:

Table 7: Rating of School Management Committee with reasons for rating them so

Rating	Reasons for the Rating
Very Active	Hard working and able to take care of all issues affecting the school promptly i.e. moulding bricks, building teachers houses, constructing and repairing permanent and temporary school blocks (shelters) on self-help basis, purchasing door frames, collecting sand etc.; Mobilizing community and encouraging them to send their children to school resulting into reduced pupil absenteeism and high enrolments. Holding meetings regularly in conjunction with PTA's to discuss issues affecting the school; Working together as a group in all things but also working very closely with chiefs, PTA, teachers, and Primary Education Advisor; Assisting teachers through the provision of teaching and learning materials; Mobilizing people to do school development work. Stayed longer in their positions since 1998 because of their achievements and people do not want to change them; Have a volunteering spirit so that they, (the school management committee members) are able to do some work on their own e.g. contribute funds for purchasing of other items needed at school; build teacher's house themselves etc.; Supervise and monitor the school project activities regularly; Mediate between school children and teachers when disagreements arise and also settle disputes amongst teachers.

Active	Most members are not trained and lack guidance; Only a few (3) out of the nine elected members are active i.e. present during most meeting times to sort out issues, the rest participate when they know they will get a reward in form of money etc; Resolve issues between teachers; Call parents where there are issues concerning the pupil's behaviour.
Barely Active	Composition of the committee not complete.(5 out of 9 Members); Do not meet regularly to discuss issues affecting the school; Some members are illiterate which leads to their limited participation in school management; Over stayed as committee members, which has made them to lose interest in school development work.

For the school Management committees that were rated very active and active, the following given reasons stood out conspicuously.

- The School Management Committees being able to promptly call upon parents and teachers to deal with problems affecting the schools. The main problems for which parents and teachers were called included building teachers houses, constructing permanent or temporary school blocks, brick moulding, maintenance of school infrastructure, pupil absenteeism and providing reading materials.

- Good coordination and cooperation amongst school management committee members, chiefs, parents teachers association, teachers, parents and Primary Education Advisor also featured highly. Related to the above reason is the settling of disputes or differences between school children and teachers and also amongst teachers.

- The school management committees being able to regularly and jointly supervise and monitor school project activities.

- The school management committee members themselves, as individuals, being able to voluntarily provide finance, labour, etc. towards solving a particular problem.

However, the rating and reasons were crosschecked with the activities that the school management committees did during the year. Table 8 summarizes the results on activities done.

Table 8: School Management Committee rating against activities done

Rating Category	Activities done during the Year
Very Active	Moulding bricks for school block, teacher's houses, pit latrines etc; Conducting meetings regularly; Mobilizing children from villages to go to school; Conducting reading campaign so that parents contribute reading materials; Constructing pit latrines, teachers houses; Monitor teacher's and pupils' performance; Assess school needs; Mobilizing the community to carry out school development work; Organizing volunteer teachers for primary and nursery schools; Initiating nursery school on self help basis; Planning strategies and implementing them in order to raise funds to assist volunteer teachers; Teaching traditional dances to pupils; Clearing school woodlots and school surroundings; Purchasing pupil first aid treatment kit; Contributing money to buy gifts to reward successful pupils during end of year results;
Active	Maintenance of teachers' houses, office, school block; Selling trees from school woodlot, collecting rentals from teachers' houses to generate funds; Sensitizing parents on school open days; Organizing meetings; Conducting reading campaign; Sensitizing communities on the effects of pupil absenteeism; Purchasing First Aid treatment kit; Employing volunteer teachers; Buying chemicals to kill pests; Moulding bricks for school blocks; Mobilizing community for school construction work i.e. collect sand stones etc; School management Chairperson counseling pupils on the effects of

	immoral behaviour, early marriages and importance of education; Constructing toilets; Monitoring punctuality of both teachers and pupils; Facilitating/negotiating the shifting of a market from the school premises.
Barely Active	Replacing broken window glass panes for teacher's houses.

The rating of interviewees and reasons for doing so are confirmed in Table 8 where they rated the school management committee, for the work they actually did. It can be concluded from this information that the perceptions of the community about the activeness of school management committee is influenced by what they see the SMCs doing.

From Table 8 it can also be noted that most of the activities done by the School Management Committees involved the communities' contribution in form of labour, material or financial. At times they were also involved in counseling pupils and monitoring the performance of pupils and teachers.

Parents Teachers Association:

For the Parents Teachers Associations, the respondents were also asked to provide the reasons for their ratings. Table 9 summarizes their responses.

Table 9: Ratings of PTA with the reasons given for such ratings

Rating Category	Reasons for the Rating
Very Active	Monitoring the welfare of teachers and pupils and holding frequent meetings to discuss issues that affect them and the school in order to find solutions; Educating pupils in dances, drama, songs; Ability to work jointly with the SMC's and village heads; Disciplining pupils; Encouraging pupils to read and attend classes as well as adhering to class rules; Monitoring the punctuality of pupils and teachers; Conducting village campaigns to encourage all the school-going age children to go to school; Participating in carrying out development activities.

Active	Some members coming to meetings only when they hear there is an allowance; Conducting meetings with SMC's and parents regularly to discuss issues affecting pupils and teachers; Helping SMC's in school infrastructure maintenance; Mobilizing school going age children to go to school and discouraging them from being absentee from school; Discussing and resolving differences between school children and teachers; Mobilizing parents to construct school blocks.
Barely Active	Conducting meetings for parents to carry sand and mould bricks for the construction of a school block; Not meeting regularly to discuss issues affecting teachers and pupils; Limited participation of some PTA members because of their illiteracy; Fewer members of PTA members in a committee i.e. 3 only instead of 9; Overstaying by some committee members which has led to some losing zeal to work hard and are no longer committed to see that education is progressing well at the school; Only one member being active i.e. always present at meetings or any work.
Not Active	- Nothing that can be pointed at as the achievement of the PTA.

It can be seen from Table 9 that the PTA's were rated as very active or active because they:

- Were able to frequently hold meetings after noting that some teachers and pupils had problems. These problems were noted during their monitoring and observation exercise.

- Were able to monitor the punctuality of pupils and teachers.

- Were able to sensitize and mobilize communities and the school going age children on the importance of education and the need to attend school classes regularly.

- Had the ability to work jointly with the school management committees and village chiefs in school development work. The school development work comprised: collecting school construction materials like sand, and stones; constructing school blocks and shelters, and maintaining the school infrastructure.

The above information was compared with the ratings and activities done by the PTA during the year for verification. The following were the findings.

Table 10: PTA ratings against activities carried out

Rating Category	Activities done by PTA During the Year
Very Active	Ensured that teachers did not come late for duties and that there was cooperation amongst themselves; Conducted reading campaign; Provided volunteer teachers where there were shortfall of teachers; Roofing the classrooms; produced reading materials; Assisted SMC's in the construction of teachers' houses, temporary (shelter) classroom by mobilizing parents to provide thatching grass, finances, labour, and mould bricks; Conducted meetings (on average 7) with parents and teachers on development issues; Assisted in fund raising for school box by selling firewood from school woodlot trees; Teaching traditional dances;
Active	Conducted meetings with teachers and parents; Worked together with SMC's on contributions; Moulded additional bricks for a school block; Collected sand; Cut firewood for burning bricks; Sensitized and mobilized children and parents on the advantages of education; Imparted vocational skills to children; Solved disagreements between teachers and pupils; Advised parents on how best they can care for their children in order for them to continue with education.
Barely Active	Done nothing really that one could point to. Cooperated with the SMC's to pay for a postal box for the school; Monitored the discipline of teachers and pupils and their punctuality to school.
Not Active	Done nothing; only 3 members worked with the SMC's.

After establishing the areas in which the school management committee and PTA participated in, and communities' perception as to whether they regarded the SMCs or PTAs very active, active, barely active or not active depending upon what activities they had done, it was needful to establish their participation in decision making process on school issues in order to fully understand their participation. The next section will shed more light in this context.

4.7.3 **Community participation in decision making process**

One of the key roles of the school management bodies is organizing and facilitating meetings. The research was aimed at establishing the participation of the various members of the community during such meetings. What transpired is that, as can be seen from Table 11, about 98.7% of the people interviewed had ever attended a meeting. Most of them indicated that they attended the meeting eight times in the year. Various stakeholders organized the meetings.

The respondents were also asked whether they had taken part in the discussions or were able to air out their views during the meetings. From the whole sampled respondents, 66.7% of the respondents stated that they had participated in the discussions and were able to air out views while 33.3% said they did not participate neither were they able to air out their views. Table 11 indicates the percentage of the respondents that had attended a meeting called by a particular stakeholder and out of those who attended, the percentage of the people that were able to air out their views.

Table 11: % of respondents that had attended the meetings called by different stakeholders and % of those attended that aired out their views:

Stakeholder	% of respondents that Attended Meeting	% of those Attended that aired out views	
SMC	26.6%	30% }	
PTA	13.8%	10% }	55%
SMC + PTA	13.8%	15% }	
HT/Teachers	10.3%	10% }	
HT/SMC	10.3%	15% }	35%
HT/PTA	10.3%	10% }	
PEA + MOE Officials	10.2%	5% }	
SCF		}	10%
	3.4	5% }	

The reasons for not participating ranged from inability to read, to opportunity not presented to them to air out views. It was mostly the pupils that were not given the opportunity to air out their views as stated by one of them, Veronica Alick,

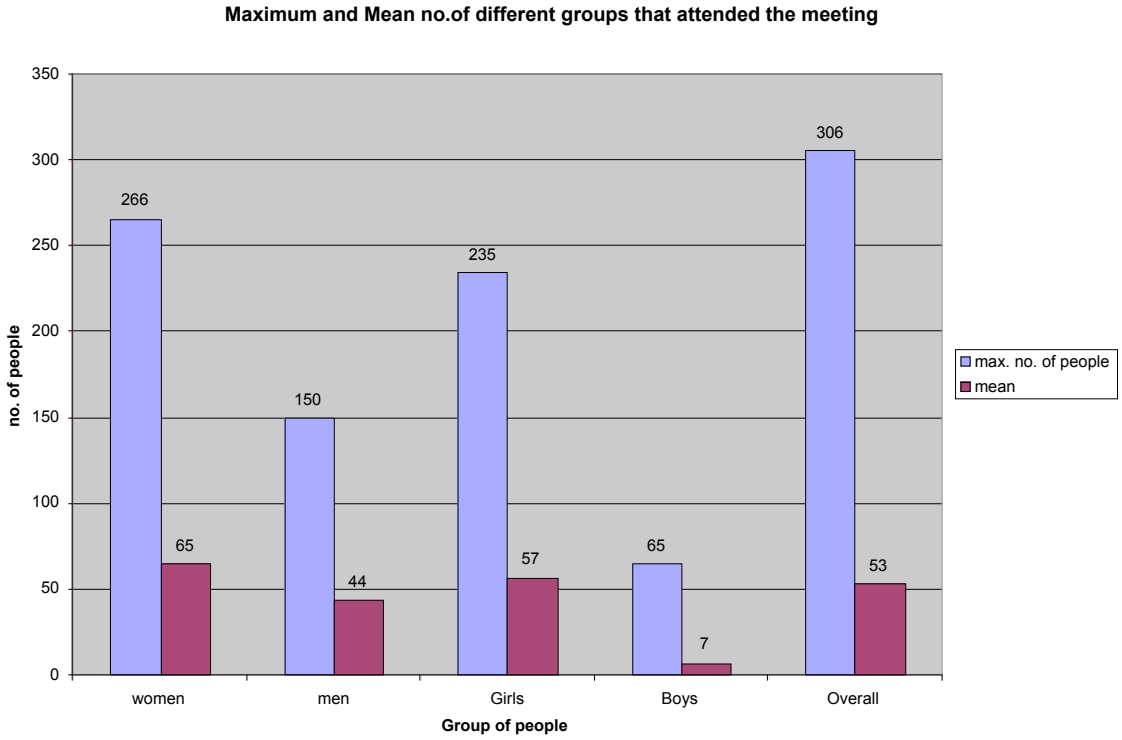
> "The meetings we hold with teachers, pupils are just told what to do. In the other meeting the teachers told us 13 laws and that if one broke one of them, he or she was going to be sent home. They just told us those rules and said "that's what we called you for, now go_____." That's where they make mistakes for they do not ask us if we have any questions on what they have said."

The other reasons mentioned by the respondents included; the organizers feeling they, the participants, could not contribute anything and having no idea apart from what they were told.

Meetings organized by the SMC's and PTA's seemed to have given the communities more opportunity to air out their views i.e. 55% followed by the ones conducted by the Head teachers. During any such meetings the number of people in attendance could go up to 306 with a mean of 52 most of them being women.

Figure 4 shows the maximum and mean number of different groups that attended a particular meeting.

Figure 1: Maximum and mean number of different groups that had attended a particular meeting



When the people were asked to elaborate on how the meetings were conducted the responses varied according to the topics and the people that called for the meeting. Table 12 provides some details:

Table 12: The way different stakeholders conducted the meetings

Stakeholder that called for the Meeting	Topics	How the Meeting was Conducted
SMC	Pupils absenteeism; lack of respect by pupils for their teachers; how to organize roofing materials for the school block; punctuality of pupils; need for school going age children to enroll in school; and how to mould bricks for pit latrines construction.	The chairperson or secretary did introduce the topic and allowed the people to discuss the issue and come up with suggested solutions. Thereafter the people agreed on the course of action to take. The agreed upon idea is what the SMC and PTA implemented. People were allowed to ask questions for clarity as soon as the agenda was introduced. Every body was free to talk.
PTA	Fundraising for the school. Preparations for the open day where the best pupils were to be awarded gifts.	The Head teacher, who is the secretary for the PTA opened the meeting and handed over to the PTA chairperson who explained the agenda. He also asked the participants to comment and give recommendations. During such meetings the chairperson or Head teachers suggested the amount of money that each parent was required to pay in order to meet the cost of buying the wanted item. The parents in such cases just agreed and paid.
SMC + PTA	Construction of school block; How to care for children in order for them to be educated; Disadvantages of early marriages; Need for	The Head teacher, school management committee and PTA chairpersons chaired the meeting. The chairpersons gave ideas and the parents participated in arriving at a decision that was going to assist in solving

	pupils First Aid treatment kit	the problem i.e. how to ensure that the children are protected from bad behaviour during the holiday and how they could not forget academics. On issues of early marriages the chairperson told the parents not to force their girls into early marriages. The children were just told to take care of themselves. At times the importance of a particular thing e.g. first aid kit was highlighted to parents who were asked to discuss ways of sustaining the kit after the injection of the first aid given.
Head Teachers/ Teachers	Rules of the school Reading campaign First Aid Treatment kit	Head teacher just told pupils about the school rules and that anybody violating them was going to be punished. The pupils were not allowed to ask questions, let alone make any suggestions. As for the other topics the Head teacher asked parents to contribute either cash to purchase things or materials for reading.
Head Teacher/SMC	Absenteeism of pupils; Reading campaign	Parents were asked to discuss in small groups how they could assist their children on how they could be able to read and they came up with solutions. On absenteeism parents also discussed on what should be done and they agreed to be checking the pupils' daily work.
Head Teacher/PTA	Construction of school block and fundraising for school postal box	Parents discussed on what should be done. They were allowed to ask questions and decided what to do.

PEA	Shortage of Teachers	Parents were told to find and employ volunteer teachers to supplement the shortage of teachers.
PEA/Head teacher	How to ensure that all school going age children are enrolled in school	Parents were first sensitized on the importance of education and then asked how they could ensure that all school-going age children were enrolled in school.
MOE Officials	How to improve quality in primary education	The parents and pupils were asked to discuss why education was going down and how it could be improved.
Save the Children (US)	Reading campaign	The chairperson was somebody from Save the Children (US). He introduced the topic and asked people to come up with what they were to do and when.

What is quite interesting from the survey results is that even though some members did not participate during meetings but when interviewed as to whether they had engaged themselves in any school improvement related activity, they all stated that they took part in school improvement related activities. These activities included:

- Volunteer teaching
- Collecting materials for reading campaign
- Brick moulding
- Mobilizing pupils to go to school
- Collecting building materials for construction of school blocks, teachers houses and pit latrines i.e. sand, thatching grass etc
- Digging pit latrines
- Planting flowers and taking care of trees around the school.

- Contributing funds for nursery school in order to buy sugar, salt for porridge. The funds were also used for other activities like brick moulding.
- Actual construction of teachers' houses, school sign posts etc.
- Teaching the pupils music using locally available resources.
- Leading discussions of school condolence committee, welfare committee etc.
- Cleaning classrooms and school surroundings.
- Holding extra classes in the afternoon for pupils in order to cover all subject topics in the syllabus.

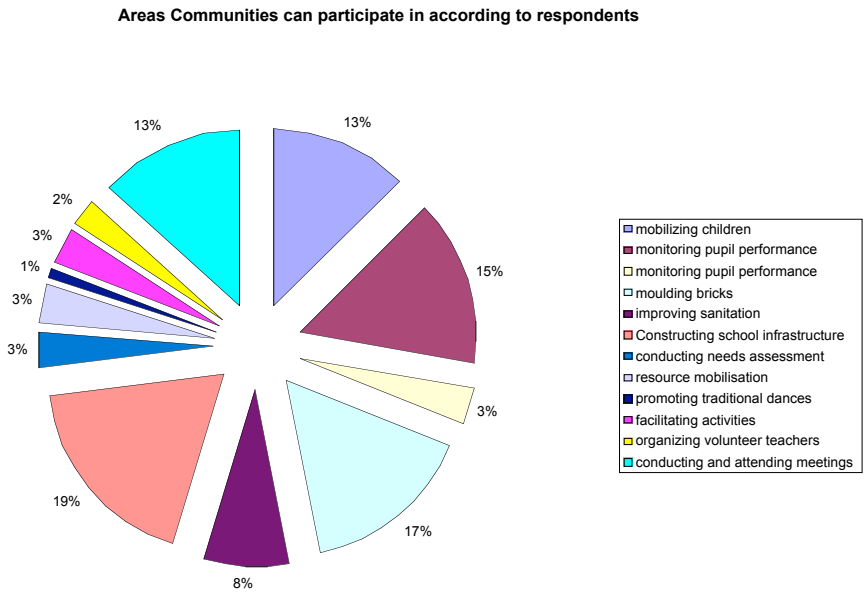
The only activities that the respondents stated they had never participated in were conflict resolution between teachers and administrators and meetings scheduled on Sundays because they went to church.

After finding out the activities they engaged in, it was important to find out from them whether they were satisfied with their input. The aim was to see whether they have the capacity to do some work outlined in the NSCPPSM policy document. This was going to be done by aggregating the actual work they were engaged in with the perceived potential they said they had.

4.7.4 **Communities' perception on what activities they could participate in**

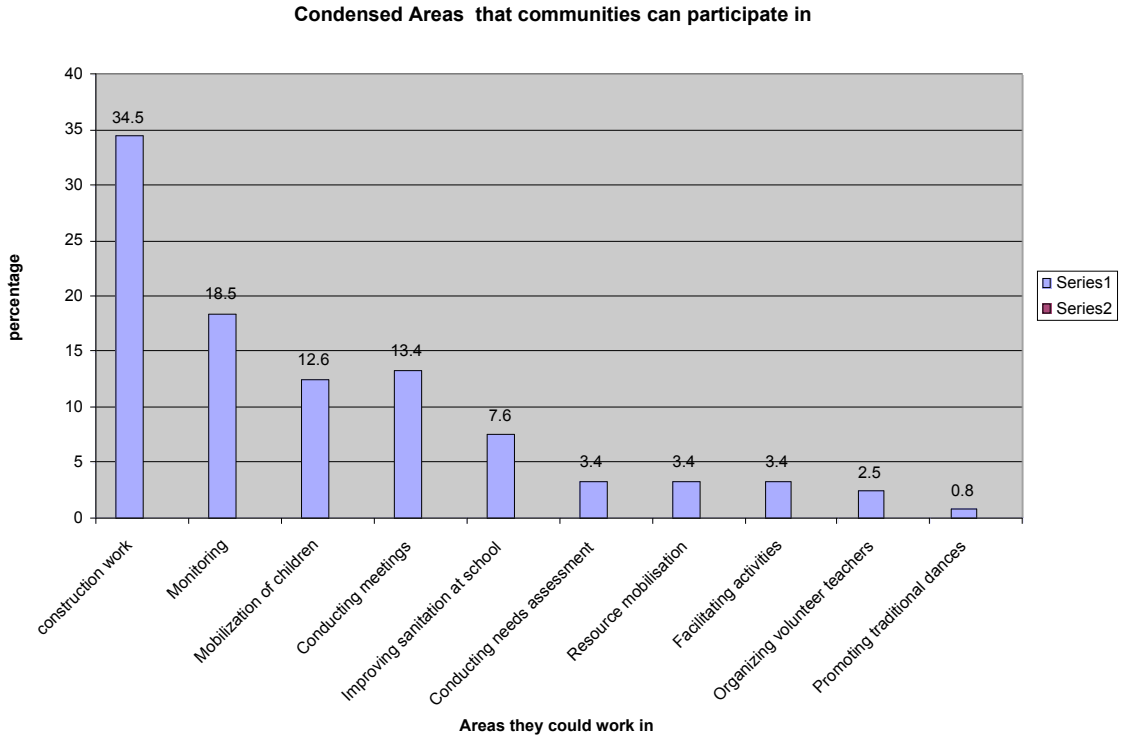
Communities perception on areas they thought they could participate in order to improve education was sought through the structured questionnaire and focus group discussions. There were twelve areas that were mentioned. Figure 2a gives the details.

Figure2a: Perception of respondents on areas communities can participate in



From figure 2a it is noted that construction work i.e. moulding bricks and construction of school infrastructures does feature highly in the minds of the people. These are the activities that they thought they could easily participate in i.e. 34.5% followed by monitoring of pupils and teachers performance (18.5%). These two activities on aggregate take up 53% the respondents. The next activities that follow are conducting meetings (13.4%) and mobilizing school-going age children to go to school (12.6%). If these areas were condensed in the categories indicated above, they could be represented graphically as follows:

Figure 2b: Condensed Areas in which communities can participate in according to the Perceptions of the respondents



A further question was posed to find out as to who actually amongst the community members would be responsible for carrying out the activities they perceived could be done by them and why. The following were their responses.

Table 13: Stakeholders responsible for particular activities

Activity	Responsible people (Arranged in order of most responsible, etc.)	Reasons for selecting the indicated target group
Mobilization of school going age children to go to school	Parents, PTA and SMC	They are part of the community and the responsibility of educating their children rests on them.
Monitoring pupil performance, attendance and progress	Parents, Teachers, Head teacher, PEA, PTA, SMC, Pupils, Village heads	They are the ones that are able to know how a child is fairing at school and whether a child really goes to school or not. They are able to safeguard the future of the children.
Monitoring teacher performance	PTA/SMC, PEA, Parents, Teachers, Head teacher	They are the ones that observe the activities at the school and report the findings
Moulding bricks	Parents, Village chiefs, PTA/SMC	The government stated so. The chiefs due to their authority are able to mobilize parents and supervise them. It is the children of the parents that will benefit from the school. The school is part of the parents' development work they are supposed to do.
Improving sanitation at the school and also establishing school garden and woodlot	Pupils, Parents and Village chiefs; SMC& PTA; Teachers/ Head teacher/SMC/PTA	They are responsible for improving the environment of the school surroundings.
Constructing school infrastructure	Parents; Village chiefs; SMC+ PTA; Teachers & PEA; pupils	They are responsible for improving learning environment of their children

Conducting needs assessment and priorities	SMC + PTA; Parents; Teachers + Head teachers	They are the ones that look after the social and academic problems of the child; they manage the schools.
Resource mobilization i.e. reading materials fund raising	Parents; SMC + PTA; Village chiefs	Parents are the ones to improve their children's learning environment. The village heads are the only ones that can tell their subjects what to do.
Promoting traditional dances	Parents	They have the skill and art to do this type of work.
Facilitating Activities	Parents; SMC + PTA	They are the ones that are supposed to lead in all activities
Organizing for volunteer teachers	PEA/SMC/PTA	They are the ones that know what type of a volunteer would teach and also train him or her. It is their duty to ensure development is taking place in their area, one of which is education
Conducting and attending meetings	PTA/SMC, Village chiefs, parents	It is their duty to ensure development is taking place in their area, one of which is education.

4.7.5 **Community Perceptions on what activities outlined in NSCPPSM could they participate in**

The government of Malawi has outlined a number of activities in its NSCPPSM policy document that she feels communities should participate in before it could be termed "sustainable community participation." It was

therefore important, after finding out what activities the interviewees participated in and thought could be participated by the various groups of people, to get their views on what activities listed in the NSCPPSM could be participated by who and why? It would be very vital during the analysis to compare the perceptions of the people and that of the government. A determination would thus be made whether sustainable community participation can be a reality or not. The information would be able to give a clue as to what is perceived as community by the people and at the same time what capacity do the communities perceive to have. From the interviews it transpired that most people felt the PTA/SMC were the main target groups that can do the activities listed in NSCPPSM policy document. The next groups that follow the PTA/SMC are teachers, head teachers, parents, chiefs, pupils, PEAs, CDAs, other Government officials and NGOs, Members of Parliament, Ward Councilors, School Project Committees and drama groups. Table 14 gives more details.

Table 14: Activities outlined in the NSCPPSM policy that communities felt the various groups could be involved in.

	Activity	**Responsible People**	**Why Such People**
1.	School Action Plan	SMC,PTA, Teachers, Village chiefs	• They know the needs of the school • They are the beneficiaries of developments of the school hence the need to participate in planning • They know how best to plan and accomplish development work • Teachers are mostly involved in activities hence the need for them to help in planning • They are the owners of the school
2.	Sensitization of Communities	Village chiefs, PTAs, SMC, Government and NGO officials, Teachers, drama	• Communities trust the chiefs and hence can easily encourage their subjects in issues of education. • They are part of the community and people can easily understand them.

		groups	• They can make sure that people share responsibility equally • They have the knowledge on how to sensitize the communities. • It is their role to conduct meetings with people. • They know the problems of pupils at home and at school.
3.	Conducting needs assessment and priorities	SMC, PTA, Teachers, Head teachers, PEA, Chiefs, Parents	• They know the needs, problems of the school and can easily prioritize them. • They easily communicate with teachers who identify the school's problems and needs. • They have knowledge of what is taught in schools and the needs thereof. • They monitor schools and can present the school's needs to the government and make a follow-up
4.	Developing Social Contracts	SMC, PTA, Teachers, Village chiefs	• They are the ones that are managing funds for the school • They know the problems of the schools and chiefs can mobilize the people to identify good contractors. • They can mobilize the people to work on development work. • They can ensure that the people have accomplished the task properly • They are entrusted with the managerial task at a school
5.	Managing School	SMC, PTA, Teachers, PEA, Village chiefs, Government & NGO	• They are the ones that identify school needs and help to manage the school. • They are community leaders in education • They represent the owners (community) of the

		officials	school. • They know more about school management i.e. laws that govern the school. • They are answerable to anything affecting the schools. • The school is their development infrastructure that benefits their own children. • The Head teacher keeps all school records and is a leader at school.
6.	Budgeting	SMC, PTA, Teachers, Head teachers & PEA; Village chiefs	• Know the needs and school • Responsible for accounting for money for the school • Have ways of sourcing funds for the school • It is their role to budget for the school activities • Represents the community who are owners of the school.
7.	Resource mobilization and allocation	Teachers, Head teacher, PEA, NGO and Government officials, Members of Parliament	• Know the needs of the school and pupils • Account for resources and monitor the proper use of them. • Can mobilize resources as they have the technical know how. • It is their role to manage schools' needs and resources.
8.	Sustainability and ownership	Village chiefs, Parents, PTA, SMC, Government officials and NGOs, Members of parliament & Ward Councilor	• It is their responsibility to ensure sustainable development. • They can effectively sensitize, mobilize people to work to promote sustainability and ownership of projects/work. • Can easily source funds • They know the needs and can mobilize the people • They own the school

9.	Capacity Building	Government officials and NGOs, Teachers, Head teachers, PEA, CDA.	• They know the roles of each responsible group that is involved in the management of the schools. • They have a wider knowledge than most of the community members. • The government has its own strategies and rules that should be followed in school management. • Can remove from position non-committed members. • They can provide funds, resources and trainers • They are the ones responsible for widening people's knowledge.
10.	Supervision and monitoring of school activities	SMC, PTA, Teachers, Head teachers, PEA, Village chiefs	• It is their role and duty to monitor development in their areas and make sure the activities are completed on time. • All activities come through them to the community. • They easily work together with parents • They can mobilize people and manage the school activities. • They are the representatives of the owners of the school (the community). • They are leaders of the school and people can take heed of their words. • They can punish people who do not participate in development work.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The chapter has been able to give a background to community participation in Malawi. It has also managed to inform how communities define community and community participation, what school activities the communities participated in and what they perceive they could participate in and who could be responsible for particular activities. It has also stated the respondents' responses to what activities outlined in the NSCPPSM document were the communities able to participate in. The stakeholders that the interviewees felt were responsible for the activities have also been highlighted in the same chapter. More clarity has been given on the decision making process that is followed by the School Management Bodies.

It is important to critically analyze the background, field research findings against the concepts and theories in order to establish whether or not sustainable community participation is or can be, achieved in Malawi. This is what will be done in the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: APPLICATION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS TO FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will apply theoretical frameworks to assess the participation of communities in school management process in Malawi. This will be done by looking at the definitions of "Sustainable" "Community" "Participation" as defined by Pretty (1994) cited in NSCPPSM (2003:9), Atkins (1995), Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle Model (1995), Institutional and Generic as well as concepts of social capital in line with the research findings.

Pretty's (1994) level of participation adapted by the Malawi government in NSCPPSM document (2003:9) will be utilized to assess what levels of participation have the school management bodies reached according to the research findings. Atkins (1995) theory will be applied also to determine the levels of participation by the school management institutions in Malawi Primary Schools.

Moore's Strategic Triangle Model (1995) will be used to assess whether the PTAs/SMCs have the ability to address the substantive value of the clients; the capacity to produce things of value to client and beneficiaries at low cost in terms of money and authority; whether the SMCs/PTAs are Operational and Administratively Feasible and whether they have Legitimacy and Political Sustainability.

Institutional model will be utilized to assess the institutional arrangement of the school management bodies that are responsible for ensuring community participation in the management of schools at community level. The model will also be able to analyze governance at the school. Transparency and accountability in policy implementation will be assessed by utilizing Generic Model.

The discussion below will first of all look at definitions of concepts of "community," "sustainable" "community participation" and social capital in relation to the field research findings.

Based on the research findings presented in the previous chapter, it can be categorically stated without doubt that communities do participate in school management issues and that School Management Committees, Parents Teachers Associations, Teachers, Head teachers, village chiefs, parents, government and non-governmental officials play or are perceived by communities to be playing a vital role. It is also clear from the findings that communities define their own levels of participation as well as areas in which they could participate. However, whatever the communities are doing, can it be termed as sustainable community participation?

5.1 **Definitions of the concepts in relation to field research findings**

5.1.1 ***Community:***

The definition of "community" by the communities, from the research findings, is different from that was given by Chectham, USAID, Wendell Berry and IPAP. Probably the authors' definition of community as "a group of people that have a common defined goal, living in a particular area whose identity is defined by particular values and norms that govern them," seems to be more close to the definition given by the communities. The author's definition may include all stakeholders in a particular area who aim at improving primary (basic) education. Such stakeholders may include: parents, school management committees, parents teachers association committees, community leaders (village chiefs), pupils, government and non-governmental officials, teachers, Members of Parliament etc. The above groups of people were the ones that were stated by community that they comprise "community". This is in contrast with

the Education Act as well as the "National Strategy on Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy" which excludes teachers and other government and non-government officials. They are treated as external people hence more often than not are excluded when it comes to education activities that are supposed to be carried out by "the community." Mr. Chirombo, one of the interviewed teachers from Namalomba School, also lamented:

> "The teachers are not taken as part of the community. They are so isolated. They do not participate in issues that take place in the area like funerals. They are thought of as being very superior and earn a lot of money. The prices offered by communities for the commodities they sell are hiked up two or three times when they are being sold to the teachers. This is because of poor government policy that has isolated us from the community. We are part and parcel of the "community"

What the teacher was stating, that they are part and parcel of the community, was confirmed by the fund raising activities that the teachers jointly carried out with the chiefs, parents, school management committee, and parents teachers association.

Case study 3 explains the whole story

Case study 3: FUNDRAISING AND LOBBYING TAKES A WIDER HORIZON AT KABWABWA

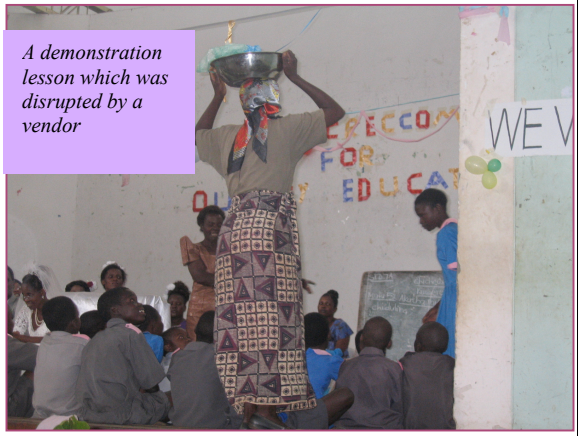
Incidences of school communities fund-raising and lobbying for their schools are no longer a unique thing in the country due to SMC-EQ mobilization activities. However, Kabwabwa Primary School, right in the Capital City, Lilongwe, has decided to go beyond the common by organizing a "wedding" in order to fend for itself. The school is in Mvunguti education zone in Area 25.

The Primary Education Advisor for the zone, Mr Exile Undi, and the Community Development Assistant, Ms Flora Khomba, conducted sensitization activities and community-based workshop for teachers, community leaders, school committee and PTA members. The target groups outlined their pertinent constraints and brainstormed on how to solve them on their own.

Their subsequent joint meetings identified inadequacy of classrooms as their major problem. The school has 16 classrooms with an enrolment of 3840 pupils, which has been split into 35 classes. Due to the shortage of classrooms, 19 classes are conducted outdoors and are often disturbed by passers-by and vendors. Having been mobilised, the people resolved that a wedding be held as a fund-raising technique. The wedding was to be complimented with lobbying from influential individuals and institutions. A number of teachers volunteered their families to serve roles of the bride and groom and one of them was Mrs Rhoda Gideon. Her husband, Ferdinand, a businessman who was also in attendance, happily welcomed the move by his wife. The whole meeting unanimously agreed that the couple were to be bride and bridegroom during the function.

Invitation cards were produced and sent to various stakeholders including the then state president Bakili Muluzi who unfortunately did not manage to attend the function. 1st May 2004 was earmarked for the event. Various committees were put in place to man such areas as transport, catering, decorations, band and fund-raising.

Came 1st May 2004, Lilongwe Teachers' Training College hall was awash with decorations. The hall was full with school committee members, PTA members, community leaders, school pupils, teachers and parents including other invited guests. A convoy of vehicles took the wedded couple to the celebrations hall as Golden Voices Band was entertaining the guests. A beautiful bridal team made of teachers preceded the couple. The celebrations were curtain-raised by a demonstration lesson that was perpetually disturbed by vendors as the class was being held outdoors. The demonstration aimed at enlightening the patrons on the problems teachers and pupils were going through at the school, especially for classes held outdoors, due to the inadequacy of classrooms. People contributed money and presents. A total of K 76,000.00 was raised at the end of the day.



A demonstration lesson which was disrupted by a vendor

Some of the influential stakeholders that graced the wedding were: the Deputy Mayor of Lilongwe City Assembly, UDF District Governor for Lumbadzi, the District Education Manager for Lilongwe City and the European Union Project Coordinator for Micro Projects, Dr. Munlo. Having had an opportunity to learn about the pathetic conditions under which pupils are learning at

Kabwabwa school and having witnessed the extent to which the people of Kabwabwa went to source funds to construct a school block, Dr Munlo did not hesitate to pledge a school block to be constructed at the school by the European Union. *"We received an invitation from Kabwabwa school to attend an SMC-EQ Project activity, it was overwhelming. We pledged to construct a school block at the school. The project has already been approved and will kick off very soon."* He said.

The community intends to use the money raised to support the impending project through such activities as ferrying sand, bricks et cetera basing on the agreements that will be made with the European Union, and also support other development activities at the school. An account has already been opened where the money has been banked.

"We are very thankful to all the people who came and supported us." Said the head teacher of the school, Mr. Kapyepye, "We started like we would never finish but the SMC-EQ Project activities have had such an impact on our enthusiasm and cooperation. We know that having started, we will stop at nothing until we see our school blossom into an educational quality model."

Source – CRECCOM, SMC-EQ Final Report (2004)

As can be viewed from the above scenario, lack of proper definition of "community" could have negative repercussion when it comes to "sustainable community participation" in the management of schools. There is need for the policy to clearly define the word "community." Community members that were interviewed had allocated some of the activities that the NSCPPSM (2003:15) stated were the responsibility of the School Management Committees and Parents Teachers Association to teachers, head teachers, government officials and non-government officials working or staying in the area as part of the community. These people staying in the area are expected to share the same values and norms with the School Management Committees, PTA, parents, pupils and chiefs. By implication, it means that community participation will be incomplete without the other group not included in the NSCPPSM policy document.

5.1.2 ***Sustainability:***

According to the definition given for sustainability it is clear from the respondents interviewed, there are some activities that they perceive can not be sustained by the communities themselves without government and non-governmental officials unless, as stated earlier own, the definition of community encompasses all the stakeholders that were mentioned by them. Activities such as capacity building and resource mobilization and allocation, are exclusively allocated to government and NGO officials, PEA and Head teachers; and teachers, Head teachers and PEA respectively. The above groups are thus vital to achieving sustainable community participation.

5.1.3 ***Sustainable Participation***

According to Pretty (1994) adapted by the Malawi government in NSCPPSM document (2003:9) sustainable participation means the community has to move from level three to level six i.e. from functional participation, to interactive participation and self mobilization. From the research findings one can note, using Pretty's ladder of participation, that in some activities the communities have moved into level five where there was some interactive participation of communities. The challenge, however, is that communities have defined their own activity areas that they could ably participate while the NSCPPSM policy and other documents have their own defined areas. If this definition of sustainable participation is applied to all the ten activity areas defined in the NSCPPSM, then the other areas e.g. capacity building, and resource mobilization and allocation are out. There is therefore need to answer one of the fundamental question. "Against what criteria should the community participation be measured for it to be categorized as sustainable? Communities' perception or governments' defined criteria? Probably it will be ideal to assess the areas the communities perceive they could participate in before evaluating them and branding them as being unable to participate in improving the education of their children in a sustainable manner. Secondly, if their perceptions are known then plans can be made to build their capacity in areas of deficiency.

Table 15 gives a picture on what the communities perceive they could participate in, what they actually participated in and what the government state.

Table 15: Activities communities perceive and actually participate in versus government defined ones

	Activities the government state communities could participate in	**Activities in which communities actually did participate**	**Activities communities perceive they could participate**
1.	School action plan	-	✓
2.	Sensitization of communities	✓	✓
3.	Conducting needs assessment and priorities	-	✓
4.	Developing social contracts	✓	✓
5.	Managing school	✓	✓
6.	Budgeting	-	✓
7.	Resource mobilization	✓	-
8.	Sustainability and ownership	✓	-
9.	Capacity building	-	-
10.	Supervision and monitoring of school activities.	✓	✓

Note: The governments' "communities'" definition has been utilized in filling the above table. It should be noted that if the author's definition of community was utilized, then it was going to be possible that the communities would participate in all the ten activities.

This is vindicated by what can be viewed from Table 13 given earlier on

5.1.4 Community Participation:

According to the author, community participation has been defined both as a means as well as an end whereby the communities are able to identify

their own problems, come up with possible solutions to the problems, decide on the course of action to take, implement the chosen solutions and then monitor and evaluate the implemented solutions. If one bases on the authors' definition of community, then it can be argued that there is community participation in the management of primary schools in Malawi. The ability by the School Management Committees, Parents Teachers Association, Teachers and Head teachers, Primary Education Advisors, Government and Non-governmental organizations to sit down, define their problems and find solution for the defined problems, decide on the course of action to take and implement the suggested solutions, shows that there is some community participation. The stakeholders also did the monitoring and evaluation. If the definition of "community" by the author is maintained then it can comfortably be stated that the communities participated in all the activities mentioned in the 1962 Education Parliamentary Act as well as the NSCPPSM policy document. The School Management Committees and the PTAs hold meetings regularly to address school issues such as:

- Infrastructure
- Teacher and pupil performance
- Teacher and pupil discipline
- Fund raising for the school
- Quality teaching
- Absenteeism of both pupil and teachers
- Learning progress of pupils
- Mobilizing communities

Unless there is a way of defining what one could term as functional school committee as was done by a non-profit, non-governmental organization, Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) that put the following criteria:

Any school management committee that engaged in at least four of the ten variables stipulated below was rated functional.

- Frequent meetings held (decision making process)
- Teacher/pupil monitoring (guidance and counseling)
- Development projects (brick moulding, sand and stone collection, actual construction work, promotion of safe drinking water etc.)
- Donations in-kind, fundraising school incentive package for sustainability initiatives
- Lobbying (for qualified teachers, female teachers and other forms of support from government and donors).
- Providing teaching support services e.g. volunteer teaching of local crafts, dance, music, games etc.
- Supporting teachers who offer to provide extra classes for remedial/consolidation work e.g. providing pupils with snacks for the children to take between lessons.
- Involved in the organization of school and/or zonal open days e.g. by mounting displays of community initiatives in the life of the school.
- Participating in school extra-curricular activities including academic clubs such as school news desk and press conference clubs.
- If deemed desirable, setting satisfactory guidelines for acquiring school uniform

It might be wrong to glossily condemn a community that it is not participating in the management of the primary school without properly defining what criteria will be utilized (while taking into account what they perceive to be their abilities). The survey revealed that there was a wide range of areas that communities participated in. Just to confirm the research findings, the author discussed the areas in which communities participated with one of the non-profit making non-governmental organization in Malawi that was responsible for mobilizing communities

towards improving education quality and was provided with a matrix table that showed what communities did in order to improve educational quality *(See Appendix I)*.

The NSCPPSM has ten specific areas of community participation but it is ideal to let the communities define areas that they can ably participate in at a particular school by which they can be assessed before one can state community participation has taken or not taken place.

5.1.5 ***Social Capital:***

It is needful to define "Social Capital" as defined by Putnam (2000:19), Cohen and Prusak (2001:4) World Bank (1999) and the author in relation to the research findings. The respondents in the survey view all the target groups involved in education within their geographical area as "one community" or entity i.e. Parents, School Management Committees, Parents Teachers Association, Teachers & Head teachers, Primary School Education Advisors, other government and non-governmental organizations. However, there seems to be a gap between some of them and thus creating a boss/junior type of relationship. The various categories of stakeholders seem not to be neatened as a team. This was evidenced by the way the meetings were being organized and how the people participated. There was quite cohesion between parents, school management committees and parents teachers association hence more than 50% of the interviewed people had attended meetings called by the SMC's and PTA's and 55% of those attending participated in the discussion. The second meetings mostly attended by parents were those called upon by teachers, head teachers, SMC and PTA (30.9%) and only 35% of those attending aired out their views during the meeting. When the Primary Education Advisors and NGO officials called for the meetings very few

attended, i.e. 10.2% and 3.4% respectively and there was very little participation from the parents or SMC or PTA members.

What can be noted from the above scenario is that people are free to participate in discussions when they know the people they are dealing with. For any tangible results in community participation it is ideal to utilize the existing social capital. The other government and non-governmental officials, if not residing in the area are looked at as externals or outsiders having all the "technical know – how." However, the so-called externals are expected to participate in the implementation of the planned education activities, for example, resource mobilization and allocation, and capacity building by the community.

Another striking point worthy to mention is that in the area where the survey was conducted, most women attended the education meetings that were conducted in the area. This could be due to the fact that the marriage system followed in the area is the matrilineal type. In such a marriage system, the men go to reside at the wife's place and the uncle and wife are the ones that have much control over the family matters, including education of the children in the family. It would therefore be very important to establish these connections existing in the area before one can embark on a campaign that would increase community participation in education. There is need to focus on building such connections and interactions if sustainable community participation is to be achieved. Policies that distance some people working in the "community" i.e. teachers and head teachers, need to be critically looked at and find ways of building up the gap. The government and non-governmental officials need to develop field approaches that would enable them to be closely neatened to the societies they are working with. There are very active connections amongst the village heads, parents, pupils and SMC/PTA members. This led to is active participation in meetings held and activities

done amongst themselves. The social capital needs to be built and fully utilized when it comes to community participation.

5.2 Institutional Frameworks in line with Community Participation

As stated earlier on, it is ideal to analyze the institutional frameworks in line with community participation in improving education quality. Poor or lack of proper institutional framework can lead to poor implementation of a particular policy. Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle Model and the institutional model will be utilized in assessing the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy that enlightens the PTAs and School Management committees on their roles in community participation. Any policy that is to be adopted requires that there is effective and efficient policy management that requires proper institutional arrangements. This is especially true for the government since it is the one that is responsible for developing and adopting policies. As already stated, Moore (1995) has identified three important aspects in guiding organizations or institutions to create and sustain value which include: having substantive value; legitimate and political sustainability, and operation and administrative feasibility. These three aspects will be analyzed in relation to the field research findings on the school management committees and Parents Teachers Association.

5.2.1 *The School Management Committees and the Parents Teachers Association contributing substantive value*

Moore (1995) points out to the fact that substantive value is concerned with the capacity of the organization to produce things of value to beneficiaries or clients and in this case, society or community, at low cost in terms of money and authority.

The respondents, during the research, rated the school management committees and PTAs, as active in most schools. These institutions were able to call upon meetings to sort out problems at the school, coordinated and cooperated very well amongst themselves and with the people, monitored and supervised school project activities, and volunteered to assist in the teaching of extra-curricula activities. This means they had the capacity to address the need of most community members who complained of their children not obtaining quality education at their school. Most people responded positively to the calls made by the SMCs and PTAs and thus it can be said they served the value of the society within the available means. They utilized the locally available resources at their disposal. This showed the SMCs' and PTAs' credibility in achieving the intended out puts or outcome within their capabilities.

The only problem noticed at the institutional level is the exclusion of some of the stakeholders in the SMC's and PTAs hence leading to dependency on the external resources i.e. PEAs, NGOs and other government officials for other activities. Capacity building and mobilization and allocation of resources were solely left in the hands of such officials. This could sway the SMC's and PTAs to take the values of such officials more into account than the community. For example, the communities are stating that the government and non-government organization officials as well as the teachers living in the areas should be regarded as "community members" while the policy and other government and non-governmental organization officials think otherwise. This has affected the SMCs and PTAs thinking horizon in terms of their capacity.

5.2.2 ***School management committees and parents teachers association maintaining legitimacy and political sustainability***

Whatever the School Management Committees and Parents Teachers Associations were going to do was to be in line with the political decision as stated by Moore (1995), "it is important that any enterprise being done should continually attract both authority and money from the political authorizing body to which it is accountable."

The National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy which mandates the SMCs and PTAs as key players for communities to participate in primary education is in line with the new democratically elected government which wanted to bring back the zeal the communities had in participating in any development work which were eclipsed during the first "multiparty general elections." This is evidenced through the inclusion of community participation in the Policy Investment Framework 1995 – 2005 (2002) document.

The SMCs and PTAs being recognized by the various stakeholders and communities as the bodies responsible for various activities aimed at improving education quality legitimized the institutions. The mere fact that the SMCs and PTAs have been instituted by the Ministry of Education to lead the participation of communities in education is quite sustainable because these implementing structures are always going to be there. It is also very unlikely that change of government would lead to any reverse in the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy implementation.

5.2.3 ***Operational and Administrative Feasibility Action:***

This has to do, according to Moore (1995), with authorized valuable activities that can be done by the organization in joint partnership with other stakeholders that in the end would lead to the accomplishment of the desired goals.

According to the research findings, a number of stakeholders i.e. parents, teachers and head teachers, government and non-governmental organizations officials, chiefs, members of parliament etc. worked jointly with the school management committees and parents teachers association. This was in activities such as funding or fundraising, skill development and provision of information.

However, more needs to be done on utilization of the social capital and capacity building of the institutions for them to effectively face the challenges of carrying out all the expected work to be done by them i.e. planning and designing; appraisal, implementation and reflection and learning. Lack of capacity could lead to low or no community participation in the management of education in the primary schools.

5.2.4 ***Institutional arrangements***

According to the institutional model, it is important to critically analyze organization power relationship and the institutional arrangements. Things like working relationships, political stability of principal actors and bureaucracy assist in determining how decision-making processes are taking place.

From the research findings it can be seen that there is no clear organization arrangements when it comes to who reports to whom. For

example, the head teacher is a secretary in the PTA but not a member of a School Management Committee. The Head teacher is responsible for orienting the PTA and School Management Committees on their roles. However the PTA (to which the Head teacher is a member) and the School Management Committees are to report to either Primary Education Advisor or the District Education Manager or the local Agency. This is very confusing and as such has left most communities not helped since they do not know whom to report to.

Secondly the research findings revealed that the SMC and PTA committee members are mostly illiterate and as such do not look at themselves and the other stakeholders as equal. There is inferiority complex between the members of the School Management Bodies and the "government or non-government employees." This has also been reflected in the participation of communities during the meetings held by different stakeholders. This in turn does affect the decision making process.

It is therefore important to look at the institutional arrangement of the School Management Bodies critically in terms of capacity and organization power relationship first if sustainable community participation is to be achieved.

5.2.5 ***Transparency and Accountability***

Generic Model hinges on participation of communities when it comes to implementation of policies especially at local level. This ensures that policies are truly translated into the intended to be achieved objectives. In order for maximum community participation, transparency and accountability is vital.

The research findings revealed that the School Management Committees and the Parents Teachers Association called for a number of meetings where they discussed education issues aimed at improving quality. It can, therefore, be stated that there was some transparency and accountability. There was also an element of planning, programming and budgeting as well as the management of human, physical and financial resources.

However, some questions need to be raised, such as, "what was the exact content of the subject matter being discussed?" "Was there effective and optimal management of human, physical and financial resources?"

The degree of participation of communities, as already stated, needs to be defined before one can conclude that there was either active or no participation.

Having looked at Moore's Strategic Triangle Model and Institutional model to assess the institutional frameworks of the PTAs and SMCs it is better to determine the levels of participation of the school management bodies in the management of the schools.

5.3 Levels of participation of school management bodies in school management as revealed by the survey results.

To determine the levels of participation of the school management bodies in the management of the primary schools, Atkins (1995) and Pretty (1994) theories as adopted by Malawi government in NSCPPSM document (2003:9) will be utilized while looking at what the survey results are revealing.

5.3.1 ***Active or Passive Role of Community Participation:***

Atkins (1995) states that community participation requires continuous interaction of the client and community, the project promoters and funding organization, the professionals and other service providers for specific inputs, as and when required and then ultimately, the public at large through its representative institutions and organizations. Atkins further showed that only when the local authority plays a supportive role, and the local authority and community have a common objective that the community is actively participating in the development endeavors.

From the research findings, it is better first of all to establish whether the School Management Committees and the Parents Teachers Association did play an active role (i.e. little or no communication with the community) or a supportive role (i.e. enough communication with the community). About 96.7% of the interviewed people had ever attended a meeting called upon by the school management bodies. Most of them had indicated that they attended the meetings eight times in a year. This is far beyond the minimum number of three meetings that the PTA/SMC are supposed to call per year. Apart from that, they all participated in one or more activities aimed at improving educational quality at their schools. It could thus unequivocally be concluded that there was continuous interaction between the school management bodies and the community at large.

Looking at the activities the SMCs and PTAs were engaged in, it is discovered that their role was more of supportive in nature than they themselves doing the actual job. They were more of facilitators than implementers i.e. holding meetings and letting the community to discuss issues and decide on what to do by developing an action plan and implementing it.

The School Management Committees and Parent Teachers Association had a common objective with the community, that of improving education quality. This is why most members of the community participated in the activities aimed at improving educational quality.

However, one thing worthy noting, not all participated in the discussions during the meeting even though more than half did. The question that is posed is: "should it be all members at the meeting or what percentage of the participants at the meeting should participate in discussions for one to call such participation as active or not active?"

From Atkins theory, it could be stated that there was active participation by communities in the management of schools as the school management bodies played a supportive role. There was frequent communication between the school management bodies and the communities and that the school management bodies and the community had a common objective.

5.3.2 **Levels of Participation:**

Pretty (1994) adapted in NSCPPSM document (2003:9) has rated the first three levels of community participation in primary school management as not sustainable. These levels are categorized as passive participation, participation in information giving, consultation and participation for material incentives.

After level three, participation goes into levels of sustainability. These levels include functional participation, interactive participation and then self-mobilization.

From the research findings, the school management committees and parents teachers association were able to reach level six if the definition of community includes government and non-governmental organizations that work in the area. The communities were able to divide themselves into groups and give each other turns to mould bricks. They were also able to discuss the problems affecting their schools and come up with plans of actions that they implemented. In principle, it can be stated that movement towards sustainable participation is possible for communities if the "community" comprise all the stakeholders that the communities stated were responsible for all the ten defined activities mentioned in the National Strategy for Community participation in Primary School Management Policy (2003) document. These stakeholders include parents, SMCs, PTAs, chiefs, PEAs, MPs, teachers, head teachers, pupils, government and non-governmental officials. If these worked together then there will be sustainable community participation.

This would be in agreement with the definition given previously by the author concerning sustainability i.e. "something that can continue regardless of whatever opposing forces are being met. Something that has some self-existing in built mechanisms within it that enables it to exist forever."

A caution should be made here though that extractive government and non-governmental officials would be viewed as external institutions such that their pulling away from the society or community would be detrimental to the achievement of sustainable community participation. The assigning of capacity building and resource mobilization and allocation to such groups or institutions vindicates this point.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter has demonstrated, through the theory and research findings what "sustainable community participation" is, whether this is prevalent or not in Malawi primary schools and what are the implications if the definitions of "community" & "participation" and sustainable are not clarified at the beginning of any project endeavor that is to be done that aims at improving education quality. The chapter has also shown that whatever communities are doing, through the various theories, can be termed as sustainable community participation. There is need, however, to consider the social capital when tackling the issue of community participation as much as there are strong institutional frameworks in the school catchment areas. It has also been seen from the chapter that lack of some of the "community members" as termed by the communities could lead to "unsustainable" community participation in the management of the schools.

As can be noted from the above chapter, there are some areas that need more focus in order to improve community participation in primary school management. The government and other stakeholders have to engage in other activities that will enable more communities to participate in primary school management. This is what will be dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter, in order to conclude the research study, will look at the objectives of the study and see how they have been fulfilled in relation to the research findings.

The study has been able to investigate Malawian communities' perception on what they thought they could effectively participate in school management. It has also been able to establish what activities they were engaged in through the leadership of SMC's, PTAs and other stakeholders. By interviewing the respondents on what they perceived to be the role of the SMCs and PTAs, the study has been able to establish the roles that could be handled by these school management bodies when it comes to participation in school management. It has been made possible, through the study, to establish the extent to which the communities may participate in activities as outlined in the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management policy document. The study has also been able to demonstrate the parameters against which the communities as well as the school management committees could be measured or evaluated in order to establish whether they are active or not active rather than the globally set standards. The study has also investigated the effect of governance on community participation in school management.

It is clear from the study that the communities have their own standards and in order for them to be able to achieve the standards set up by the government or other organizations, there is need for some action.

6.1 Activities the communities perceive they could participate in and what they actually participated in when it comes to school management

From the research findings, it can be deduced that communities, as per government of Malawi's definition of community, are not blank. They have some knowledge on what they think they can participate in. The activities include: Drawing school action plans; sensitization and mobilization of communities (including pupils) towards education equality, conducting needs assessment and priorities; developing social contracts; managing schools; budgeting and monitoring pupil and teacher performance and attendance (see table 15 on page 118). Resource mobilization, sustainability and ownership, and capacity building were considered by the community to be the responsibility of the government and other stakeholders like non-governmental organizations etc. However if the definition of community by the author is utilized it can be stated that the community can participate in all the activities outlined in the NSCPPSM policy document.

In all the schools there were PTAs and School Management Committees and the communities through these school management bodies participated in:

- The meetings that were held regularly to discuss issues affecting the school
- Volunteer teaching
- Mobilization of school going age children to go to school and discourage absenteeism.
- Mobilization of locally available resources for construction work i.e. sand, bricks, funds etc as well as education teaching materials e.g. reading campaign materials, first aid treatment kit etc.
- The school management bodies resolved conflicts at the schools

- Promotion of hard working spirit amongst pupils through the rewarding of best pupils in a particular class.
- Counseling pupils on the effects of early marriages, immoral behaviour and importance of education.
- Monitoring of teacher and pupils welfare and performance.

What is noted is that communities participated in the activities that they perceived they could participate in. This was possible because of the existence of institutional bodies that were there at the schools. The "community" according to the definition of the author, successfully, to some extent, carried out work as stipulated in the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management Policy. If all the stakeholders mentioned by the community that were to be responsible for particular activities (see table 14 on page 105) are present in the community, it can be concluded that there is some sustainable community participation by the community in the schools where all "community" members are present.

However, it should be pointed out that in the absence of some "community" members like government and non-governmental organization officials, achievement of "sustainable community participation" is questionable. There is also need to ensure that all the "community" members play their roles to the fullest in order to achieve maximum community participation.

6.2 The role of school management bodies (SMC's/PTA's) in school management

The National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management policy document outlined clearly what role these school management bodies are to play when it comes to improving educational

quality. They are to be the lead agents in all the ten activities that the communities are to participate in i.e. drawing school action plans; sensitization and mobilization of communities (including pupils) towards education equality, conducting needs assessment and priorities; developing social contracts; managing schools; budgeting and monitoring pupil and teacher performance and attendance.

From the study, to some extent, the communities were able to participate in some of the mentioned activities. However, the participation was not as systematic as is stipulated in the policy document. For example, it is stated that when conducting needs assessment and priorities there is need to do a thorough understanding and analysis of issues and with full participation of all stakeholders so that the most appropriate needs concerning primary school management are prioritized. From the research findings, it can be seen that communities discussed constraints to quality education at their schools and chose one constraint that they could ably tackle. However, there was no systematic procedure and process that was followed.

In order to ensure that communities participated effectively and efficiently in all areas that the policy document on community participation in school management stipulated, there is need for capacity building. Interestingly though, the task of capacity building had been allocated, during the survey, to the government and non-governmental organizations by the community. The communities thought, as stated earlier on, they could participate in school action plan, sensitization of communities, conducting needs assessment, developing social contracts, managing schools, budgeting, sustainability and ownership, supervision and monitoring school activities. They mentioned PTAs and SMCs as their lead agents in such activities.

6.3 The effect of school governance on community participation in school management

Just as seen from literature, governance of the country can and does influence community participation in school management. During the multiparty campaign rallies, the pro-multiparty groups branded community participation as slavery and promised liberty once voted into power. This affected community's participation in education until campaigns to deal with such attitudes and practices were instituted.

At school level, the governance of the school also does have some effect on community participation in school management. Lack of meetings and frequent interactions with the lead agents has repercussions on the way the people participate during the meetings held to discuss pertinent issues affecting education. This is noted from the survey where the SMCs and PTAs regularly called for meetings and a large number of community members aired out their views during the meeting but the opposite was true for the meetings called upon by the government and non-governmental officials which were very few and participation was low during such meetings. The frequency of the interactions between the school management bodies and the community and the ability for the communities to air out their views could adversely affect community participation in the management of their schools.

It is therefore needful to train the school management bodies on how best to lead the meetings so that many people participate during discussions. The government and non-governmental officials need to be more accessible to the people to remove the "class" system that inhibits the full participation of the community members during the discussion. The government and non-governmental officials, as development workers, should aim at bridging the gap that exists between them and the

community. As Landellmills and Serargeldin (1991:15) stated "but empowerment neither will nor assure better governance unless the responsible agencies are competent to technically manage the acquisition of skills."

In line with governance of the school is the need to critically analyze the social capital existing in the school community and utilize it for maximum community participation in the management of the schools. Social capital does affect the way communities participate in the management of their schools. It is very necessary to carefully examine the social capital and see the stock levels prevailing in a school catchment area. This will vary from one area to the other hence nobody should expect uniformity through out Malawi when it comes to community participation as much as there could be generally accepted standards. There should be an allowance of diversity. This area too requires capacity building of the development agents and members of the community.

Lastly, the study has been able to show what areas or activities the communities can ably participate in when it comes to managing their schools. Wherever the government and non-government officials **are not part of the community**, it would be difficult for the communities to participate in all the ten areas that are outlined in the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management policy document. This has been established from the perceptions of the community that were interviewed and also from what activities the community actually participated in. It is in the possible areas that the communities can ably participate in that capacity building could be done to deepen their knowledge and skills so that they effectively and efficiently participate. It is against such areas that communities' ability to participate in the management of their schools should be measured.

6.4 **Recommendations for Future Study:**

This research study has looked at communities' perception on their participation in school management. It has also established what they (the community), were able to participation in improving education quality. However there is need to conduct more research on sustainable community participation that would focus in the following areas:

- What exactly should be the material content for capacity building of the community and school management bodies?
- Social capital existing in and around the school environment and how it actually affects community participation.
- Sustainable community participation on a wider geographical sample area.

Generally, it is difficult to come up with exact degree of participation in each parameter that would enable someone to classify certain community participation as "sustainable community participation." Communities may in a small way participate in each of the parameter that could still be termed participation. However, the fertile ground is there for the communities to realize their potentials. School management bodies and all those taking part in facilitating community participation must have their capacity built in order for the Malawian communities to fully participate in the management of their schools.

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APPENDIX 2

List of schools from Ulongwe Zone – Balaka District

1. Nankhono Junior Primary School
2. Chikoleka Full Primary School
3. Namphinda Full Primary School
4. Nkhonde Full Primary School
5. Naperi Junior Primary School
6. Ngwegwe Full Primary School
7. Vimbang`ona Junior Primary School
8. Mzumundilinde Full Primary School
9. Ulongwe I Full Primary School
10. Ulongwe II Full Primary School
11. Ngwindimba Junior Primary School
12. Mpiniumodzi Full Primary School
13. Kaphirikwete Junior Primary School
14. Nkasi Full Primary School
15. Chisongwe Full Primary School
16. Kachere Junior Primary School
17. St Andrews Junior Primary School
18. Mbavi Full Primary School
19. Njese Full Primary School
20. Nsinjiriri Junior Primary School
21. Kaweya Full Primary School
22. Kavunguti Full Primary School
23. Namalomba Full Primary School
24. Kafulafula Full Primary School
25. Milambe Junior Primary School
26. Namingalala Full Primary School

APPENDIX 3: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Identification

1. Name of District _____ Name of the Zone _____

2. Name of the school _____

3. Name of respondent _____ (M/F) Position _____

(If a school committee or PTA member, how long have you been in office? ------)

Catchment's area

4. No of villages_____ No of families_____ No of people _____

Questions

5. Do you have School Management Committee at your school? Yes/No)

6. How would you rate your School Management Committee?

   (a) Very Active (b) Active (c) Barely Active (d) Not Active. Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What school activities has it been involved since January this year? (list them down)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Do you have any PTA at your school? (Yes/No)

9. How would you rate your PTA?

(a) Very Active (b) Active (c) Barely Active (d) Not Active

Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. What school activities has it carried out since January this year?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Have you ever attended any meeting that had to do with education issues during the past school education calendar? (Yes/No)

12. When was it? {Term 1 Jan – April} {Term 2 May –July} {Term 3 August –October}

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Who called for the meeting? _____

14. How many people attended the meeting? _____ (Males) _____ (Females) _____ (girls) _____ (boys)

15. Describe how the meeting was conducted (what was it all about, who was the chairperson, how were the decisions arrived at etc)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. Did you participate in the discussions or were you allowed to air out your views? (Yes/No) If no, why?

17. Since January, have you ever participated in any school improvement related management activities? (List them down)

18. Do you know of any activities that your community has participated in which you did not participate? (List them down and mention which this community was.)

19. What do you think are the areas where community would participate in order to improve education?

ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION TABLE

Type of Activity	**The targeted group and why**

Activity	**Who to participate**	**Why?**
1. School Action plan development		
2. Sensitization of communities		
3. Conducting needs assessment & priorities		
4. Developing Social contracts		
5. Managing schools		
6. Budgeting		
7. Resource mobilization and allocation		
8. Sustainability and ownership		
9. Capacity building		
10. Supervision and Monitoring school activities		