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TITLE

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE MALAWI YOUTH PARLIAMENT

RESEARCH REPORT

BY

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IN PARTIAL FUFLIMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE:

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ABSTRACT

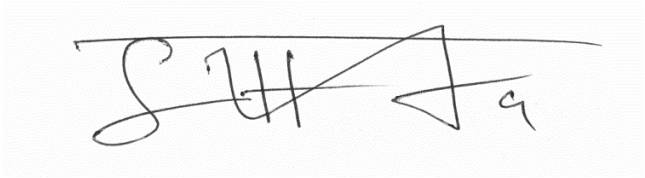
This research explores the challenges the youth face in participating in decision making processes through the mechanism of the Malawi Youth Parliament. In August 2012, conforming with international trends the Malawi Parliament launched the youth parliament with the aim of giving the youth a platform from which to voice issues that affect their lives with the hope that government and other stakeholders would pick up the issues and take appropriate action.

The Malawi Youth Parliament is planned to meet twice in a year during holidays to give a chance to school going youth parliamentarians. At the end of every meeting, the youth parliament would adopt resolutions which would be submitted to the main parliament for consideration. Once the resolutions are adopted by the main parliament it is incumbent upon Government departments to consider implementing the resolutions.

This research asked: what challenges do Malawian youth face in participating in decision making processes? This research takes a qualitative approach which looks at how unengaged youth are placed under the governance, surveillance and control of the adults. The report concludes that by arguing that youth participation in decision making processes may result in either expected or accrual outcomes depending on the factors at play. The factors are categorized as follows:- cultural, economic, legal and structural challenges. Other factors considered are institutional support and personal efforts.

DECLARATION

I, Leonard Harry Tilingamawa, student number 0710491H hereby declares that this research report was compiled on the basis of my own academic research work. It is submitted to the University of Witwatersrand in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Management in the field of Public and Development Management. It has not been submitted before to any other University for any other degree programme.



DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my wife Chitima for her love and patience and to my two boys Kluivert and Carlos and my Mom though old and a village woman has been a source of pride throughout my life. To Kluivert and Carlos, I wish you could emulate your father and go past him in life.

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May the almighty God be glorified and exalted for the strength and wisdom that he gave me throughout my studies. Special recognition and acknowledgement goes to my supervisor Mr. Murray Cairns for the wise guidance that enabled me to complete this project work.

Without the cooperation and assistance of the Malawi Parliament and in particular members of the Malawi Youth Parliament, this research work would not have been possible. In this regard, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Management, Staff of Malawi Parliament as well as Members of the Youth Parliament and their Coordinators for their participation in this research. I can only hope that my ever tiring contacts were not boring. I am therefore grateful to all.

My sincere gratitude goes to all other people that I networked with for the purposes of this research project. Lastly, the acknowledgements would not be complete if I don't take this opportunity to recognize the important roles the following displayed: my wife; kids; relatives; and friends for the support rendered to me during the entire period of my studies. I am greatly indebted to all for their appreciation and understanding as the work towards the fulfillment of the Master of Management in the field of Public and Development Management was so demanding such that most of the times when they needed me most I was not there.

Thanks

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AYC	African Youth Charter
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
DYO	District Youth Officer
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPU	International Parliamentary Union
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
MHRC	Malawi Human Rights Commission
MLC	Malawi Law Commission
MNA	Malawi National Assembly
MoE&VT	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MoNREA	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs
MoWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
MoYDS	Ministry of Youth Development and Sport
MYL	Malawi Youth League
MYP	Malawi Young Pioneer
MYP	Malawi Young Pioneers
NYCOM	National Youth Council of Malawi

UKYP	United Kingdom Youth Parliament
UNCRC	United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This research sought to explore the challenges Malawian youth[1] face when participating in the parliamentary decision making processes. In August 2012, the Malawi Parliament launched a youth parliament as a way of providing the youth a forum to participate in the parliamentary decision making processes. This is a result of the discourse of youth participation, which has in recent years achieved an almost obligatory status in youth policy documents (Bessant, 2003). This discourse is relatively new and it arose following the adoption of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Middleton, 2006). The Convention's article 12 (1) empowers children to speak on issues that affect their lives.

> *States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (UNCRC, art. 12 cl. 1).*

In Africa, youth participation discourse has been reinforced by the adoption of the African Youth Charter (AYC) of 2006. Article 11 of the Charter is specific on youth participation in all spheres of society and the role to be played by States Parties in promoting youth participation. The Charter's article 11 (2) provides for youth participation in parliamentary activities in accordance with the national laws.

> *States Parties shall guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws (AYC, art. 11 cl. 2).*

In addition to the above global instruments, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) promotes youth participation in decision making processes through parliamentary structures. Every year at the annual conference of CPA, member states are required to report on progress made on youth activities. Similarly, a conference of youth parliamentarians is held annually to deliberate on matters affecting the youth. Against this background, it is imperative

[1] Youth - all persons, female and male, from age 10 to 29 years regardless of their sex, race, education, culture, religion, economic, marital and physical status (Malawi draft national youth policy, 2010)

that national parliaments recognize and establish youth parliaments as part of their institutional set-ups.

The Malawi Government established the following Ministries to advance citizen participation in matters of national development:

- Youth Development and Sports;
- Education, Science and Technology;
- Local Government and Rural Development;
- Gender and Child Development and Community Development; and of
- Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly.

In addition to these Ministries, the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) was established under an Act of Parliament No. 22 of 1996 to coordinate youth affairs in the country. Despite the existence of NYCOM, work on integrating the youth in decision-making processes is relatively new. For a long time the country lacked comprehensive legislation on child justice (UNICEF, 2010). It relied on archaic laws to administer youth issues (the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act, the 1958 Affiliations Act, the 1949 Adoptions Act, and the 2000 Employment Act). In 2010, the Malawi Parliament passed the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, that overhauled the child rights law framework in the country. This law while comprehensive on children is not specific on youth participation in decision-making processes (UNICEF, 2010).

Currently, Malawi does not have a youth policy that provides for youth participation in decision making processes. It is reported that a youth policy is in draft form following a review of the 1996 national youth policy (Mr. G, December, 2012). The absence of a national youth policy aggravates the situation of the youth as the country cannot legislate on youth participation in decision making processes. This is against the African Union principle that all its member states should develop comprehensive and coherent national youth policies (AYC. Art. 12. cl. 1).

In Malawi, youth participation in parliamentary decision making processes has its roots in the children's[2] parliament. UNICEF first launched the children's parliament in 2001. Its objective was to provide children with the opportunity to discuss issues affecting their livelihood. Between 2001 and 2010, UNICEF coordinated eight sessions of the children's Parliament. Although the Malawi Parliament was one of the stakeholders in the operations of the children's parliament, it

[2] Children – all persons under the age of sixteen years of age (Malawi Government Republican Constitution, 1995)

did not officially recognize the children's parliament. In practice, there was no direct linkage between the two institutions. In this regard, children participation in the Malawi Parliament decision-making process was tokenistic. It was reported that the quality of debate in the children parliament had room for improvement (MNA, 2011). Against this background it was felt that a youth parliament would be a better mechanism to articulate children and youth issues.

Following:

- a resolution taken by the 122nd Assembly of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2009 that all member states of the IPU must establish national youth parliaments;
- the Malawi Parliament Strategic Plan 2010-2015;
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989; and
- The common trend amongst member states of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The Malawi Parliament established a youth parliament in August 2012. The composition of the youth parliament mirrors the Legislative Assembly in terms of the numbers. In total, there are 193 youth parliamentarians. Participants in the youth parliament are not elected through the ballot as is the case in the Legislative Assembly. Membership is through a selection process that involves interviews. The interviews are administered by the Technical Committee for the Youth Parliament through its subcommittee on selection. The selection sub committee is chaired by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The positions are made known through adverts and communication is done by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The following are the requirements for the positions:

- Be within the age range of 10 -25 years;
- Be able to read and speak English;
- Be in primary, secondary, tertiary education institutions or out of school youth;
- Reflect an equitable representation of public, private and International schools and out of school youth;
- Be of good moral character;
- Have an interest in the governance issues; and
- Demonstrate a sense of patriotism to their country (Malawi National Assembly, 2011)

This research report outlines the findings of a study that was done to explore the challenges the youth face when participating in parliamentary decision making processes in the Malawi Youth

Parliament. The following sections in this chapter outline the background to the study, problem statement, purpose statement and research question, significance of the study and structure of the report.

1.1. Background to the Study

Malawi has a total population of 13.1 million people, (Malawi Demographic Health Survey, 2010). It is estimated that out of the 13.1 million, people 40% are aged 10 to 29 years (MoYDS, 2010). According to the draft Malawi national youth policy, 'youth' has been defined as persons aged 10 to 29 years.

Malawi is a state party to both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the African Youth Charter of 2006. Youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament is part of the Malawi Government's drive to promote the citizenship rights of youth. The main objective of the Youth Parliament is to give the youth a platform on which they can give voice to issues that affect their lives and for government and other stakeholders to consider and take appropriate action (MNA, 2011). The specific objectives of the Youth Parliament are as follows:

- to provide an opportunity to the youth to give voice to issues affecting their lives socially, politically and economically;
- to give the youth an opportunity to actively participate in the policy formulation and legislative process in Malawi;
- to orient Malawian youth to the political, democratic and legislative processes of the country; to provide an opportunity to further their public speaking and leadership skills; and
- to enhance the representation of Malawian youths at various fora, locally, regionally and internationally (MNA, 2011).

1.1.2. History of Youth Participation Decision Making Processes in Malawi

Malawi attained independence on 6th July, 1964 under the leadership of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda of the Malawi Congress Party. Dr. Banda made Malawi a one party state and ruled the country for 30 years as a dictator. In his era, political participation was through political patronage. Political opposition was brutally crushed and most political opponents were arrested,

detained, tortured, sent into forced exile, and sometimes even maimed or killed (Phiri, 2000). Dr. Banda's abuse of human rights was perpetuated by the lack of a Constitution that recognized the international bill of rights. It was difficult for the citizens to freely participate in the political activities that affected their lives. Being a one party state the system allowed party zealots to occupy parliamentary seats.

Under Dr. Banda's regime youth participation was regulated through the Malawi Young Pioneer (MYP) an organization that was created to spearhead rural development work amongst young people (Phiri, 2000). Through the MYP, the youth received training in improved methods of agriculture, carpentry and building trades. On the other hand, the MYP was a major instrument for the operationalization of Dr. Banda's one party state dictatorship and terrorism. The MYP came to be recognized as the watchdog for the four corner stones of unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline around which Dr. Banda built his ideology (Phiri, 2000).

In 1994, after 30 years of oppressive rule, Malawians voted in a democratic government. In 1995, a new Constitution with a bill of human rights was adopted. The Constitution's section 20 provides for equality of all persons before the law.

> *(1) Discrimination of persons in any form is prohibited and all persons are, under any law guaranteed equal and effective protection against discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status.*
> *(2) Legislation may be passed addressing inequalities in society and prohibiting discriminatory practices and the propagation of such practices may render such practices criminally punishable by the courts (Malawi Const. part.4,* § 20*).*

The above provisions provide protection to all humans including youth. Since the adoption of the Constitution, the country has witnessed the mushrooming of governance institutions that have promoted citizen participation in decision making processes on matters affecting their lives. Examples of constitutional institutions are: the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC); the Office of the Ombudsman; the Malawi Law Commission; and the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC). These institutions and many other Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) have helped to advance the discourse of youth participation in decision making processes. The youth on the other hand have positively responded by grabbing the available opportunities for participation most notably in the social and economic spheres. This is despite the various challenges that the youth in Malawi face such as limited access to secondary education, high levels of

unemployment, HIV and AIDS, orphan hood, inadequate technical and vocational training, drug and alcohol abuse, and early marriage and teenage pregnancy (Ministry of Youth Development and Sports, 2010; Moleni and Gallagher, 2006).

1.1.3. Decision Making Processes in the Youth Parliament

The Malawi Youth Parliament has a total number of 193 members. In terms of gender the youth parliament is somewhat balanced along 50/50 representation. Their ages range from 10 to 25 years. The youth parliament has its own leadership that was elected by the youth parliamentarians. At the top is the Office of the Speaker of the youth parliament followed by the Deputy Speaker. Other office holders are: Leader of the House, Government Chief Whip, Leader of the Opposition, and Opposition Chief Whip (MNA, 2012). Unlike in other youth parliaments around the world where members are elected (e.g. United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Scotland), members of the youth parliament in Malawi are selected into their position by the bureaucrats (CPA, 1999; UKYP, 2011).

In the House, the youth parliamentarians are equally divided into government and opposition sides. This arrangement is done in order to provoke debate as members of the youth parliament do not belong to any political party. The arrangement is for one year and thereafter the two sides swap sides for another year. Their mandate expires after two years after which a new youth parliament will be appointed. The youth parliament meets twice a year and its agenda comes from the Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Speaker of Parliament (Mr. G, December, 2012). Meetings of the youth parliament are scheduled before the main parliament meetings to allow the Parliamentary Committee on Social and Community Affairs to consider and adopt resolutions of the youth parliament for tabling in the House. The youth parliament is serviced by the Secretariat of Malawi Parliament. At the end of every meeting, the Secretariat compiles all the resolutions which are then forwarded to the Parliamentary Committee. The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Social and Community Affairs is responsible for tabling in the National Assembly a report on the resolutions of the youth parliament. Once adopted by the House the resolutions are sent to relevant government ministries for the latter's consideration to implement (MNA, 2011).

1.2. Problem Statement

The youth in Malawi face challenges when participating in parliamentary decision making processes. The establishment of a Malawi Youth Parliament is aimed at fostering youth participation in parliamentary decision-making processes. Literature however, shows that the reality on the ground is somewhat different. Research that has been carried out in other parts of the world shows that the youth face challenges when participating in decision-making processes despite their countries ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. (Macleod, 2009; Moen, 2010; Moonga, 2007; Murray & Hallet, 2000; O'Donoghue, Kirshner, McLaughlin, 2002; Peteru, 2006; Sorensen, 2006). The establishment of the Malawi Youth Parliament should not been seen as an end in itself as such an initiative may remain fruitless if barriers to youth participation are not known and in the absence of a coherent national youth policy. Youth participation may only be meaningful when people in power choose to share power with and increase the power of those who may be disadvantaged in decision making processes (Finlay, 2010). In this regard, youth participation becomes critical when young people are located at the center of a process created for them that allows flexibility and ownership over their participation (Finlay, 2010).

O'Donoghue, Kirshner, and McLaughlin (2002) argue that the field of youth participation is still developing and it is critical to build on the available research in order to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the necessary conditions that support youth participation and the benefits that can accrue to participants and the wider community. This study intends to explore challenges that impede the participation of Malawian youth in parliamentary decision-making processes. As Malawi Youth Parliament embarks on its programme of work, it is imperative that the challenges are known in order to come up with the right interventions to address them.

1.3. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to explore the challenges the youth in Malawi face in participating in youth parliament decision-making processes.

Research from other parts of the world shows that the youth continue to face challenges when participating in decision-making processes (see item 1.2). The Malawi Youth Parliament is relatively new and one would assume that it is quite easy to learn from experiences of other countries. The challenge however, remains that it is difficult to generalize the findings from

other studies to the Malawian scenario as situations and cultures may differ. In this regard, it was appropriate to conduct a specific study on Malawi to explore the challenges the youth in Malawi face in participating in youth parliament decision making processes. Based on the findings, the study will make recommendations to strengthen the participation of the youth in the Malawi Youth Parliament.

1.3.1. Research question

The primary question for the study was**:**

- What challenges do Malawian youth face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?

The following secondary questions were developed to assist in obtaining data used to answer the primary question above:

- What are the underlying constraints that the youth in Malawi face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?
- Which of these challenges are more prevalent?
- How do youth respond to these challenges? and
- what policy options have been put in place to assist the youth to overcome the constraints?

1.5. Significance of the Study

As shown in section 1.1., youth constitute 40 percent of the Malawian population. In Malawi, the youth represent a vast human resource potential which, if properly prepared, can contribute positively to national development (MoYDS, 2010). This being the case, Malawi has to properly nurture its youth if they are to grow and become productive citizens. This study was aimed at exploring the challenges this large grouping of the Malawian population face with the aim of identifying ways in which youth participation may be enhanced.

This study is important as it provides the following:

- Insights on how best to cooperate with the youth in decision-making processes;
- Feedback to Parliament on its current practices and provides lessons that will assist in the management of youth parliament;

- Another platform for youth to freely express their views considering that often youth participation is adult driven; and
- In the academic world, the study enriches the existing literature on youth participation in decision-making processes and also provides other areas for further research.

1.6. Area of Focus for the Study

The discourse of youth participation in decision making processes is wide. To conduct holistic research on this discourse would require a lot of money, time and other resources. Because of the limitations of the size and scale of the research, this study focused on youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament decision making processes. Emphasis was however placed on the challenges the youth face in participating in the parliamentary decision-making processes.

1.7. Structure of the Report

In terms of chapters, this research report is structured as follows:

- Chapter one – introduces the concept of youth participation in decision making processes and provides a brief background of decision making processes at the Malawi Youth Parliament. Importantly, it touches on the problem statement, purpose statement, research question, significance of the study, area of focus and structure of the report;
- Chapter two – provides the literature review on the subject matter and it incorporates literature from published books, journals, research dissertations. The chapter also includes literature from corporate and government documents.
- Chapter three – discusses in detail the research methodology applied, research design, data collection methods, data analysis, sampling approach, validity and reliability, ethics and limitations to the study;
- Chapter four – presents research findings;
- Chapter five – discusses data analysis; and
- Chapter six – consists of summary. Conclusion and recommendations for further research

1.8. Conclusion

This Chapter introduced the research topic as well as the background to the study. It touched on decision making processes in the Malawi Youth Parliament. The Chapter also gave the problem statement, the purpose statement and the research question. The Chapter ended by highlighting the structure of the Report.

The chapter has pointed out that youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament is part of the Malawi Government's drive to promote the citizenship rights of the youth and has noted that there are challenges that the youth face when participating in parliamentary decision making processes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to the challenges that the youth face when participating in decision-making processes. The review was aimed at synthesizing the themes from international as well as regional experiences. The literature on youth participation in decision making processes was used to set the parameters for the questions, analyze research findings and to come up with the conclusion on the practicality of youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament decision making processes.

The literature review was however limited as follows:

1. First, the articles used dates back to the past 15 years. However, in some instances literature over 15 years was used due scarcity of current literature but also that the arguments or facts raised still stand to date;
2. Second, the literature search was limited by search strings in that a few words were used. Such words include: youth participation, youth involvement, citizenship, social capital, governance and decision-making. These words however, helped with the identification of key authorities that have contributed on the debate on youth participation in decision-making processes; and
3. The literature used was limited to that literature that was available on the University of the Witwatersrand library databases.

This chapter presents the following themes as uncovered by the literature review:

1) policy framework embracing youth participation;
2) benefits of youth participation in decision-making processes; and
3) Challenges to youth participation in decision-making processes.

2.2 Key concepts and theories on youth participation

Before discussing the themes, this section provides definitions of the key concepts as well as theories on youth participation in decision making processes that have been used in this study. The definitions are working definitions.

2.2.1. Youth Participation and the theories involved

The various understandings of the term 'child' are so diverse in that in practical terms it encompasses anyone below the age of 18 (Hart, 1992; McMurray, 2006). Hart categorized children into two groups i.e. children as those up to the pre-teenage years and he referred 'youth' as those from 13 - 18 years. This study is specifically on youth. The United Nations defines youth as persons aged 15 - 24 years (UNESCO, 2012). The African Youth Charter defines youth as persons aged from 15 to 35 years (AYC, 2006). This research uses the Malawi Draft National Youth Policy definition of youth as persons aged 10 to 29 years, and the term 'youth' may be used interchangeably with 'young people' (MoYDS, 2010).

Bessant (2004) describes citizenship as having the right and obligation to fully participate in the life of a society. Hart (1992, 1997) argues that a nation is regarded democratic once its citizens are involved in community activities. In this study, the term 'citizenship' is used to describe the relationship that exists between the state and the youth. Citizenship has been used as a status that suggests a sense of belonging to the society that one lives but also the responsibilities that one has to that society (Becket and King, 2002).

The concept of 'participation' is multi-dimensional and has been conceptualized differently by various scholars (Sinclair, 2004). This study will look at participation from the angle of youth participation. According to McMurray (2006) youth participation refers to the way in which young people function and interact in the society. It encompasses their participation in matters of life, be it within the family or within their communities. Kirby and Bryn (2002) classify three different cultures of participation and they argue that the three are non-hierarchical and can be appropriate depending on the organizational structure. The three are:

1) Consultation focused organization, where children and young people are consulted to inform services, policy and product development;
2) Participation focused organization, which involve young people in decision making. Often a small population of young people is involved; and

3) Child/youth focused organization, where young people's participation is central to the organization. It is assumed that young people will be listened to on all decisions that affect them.

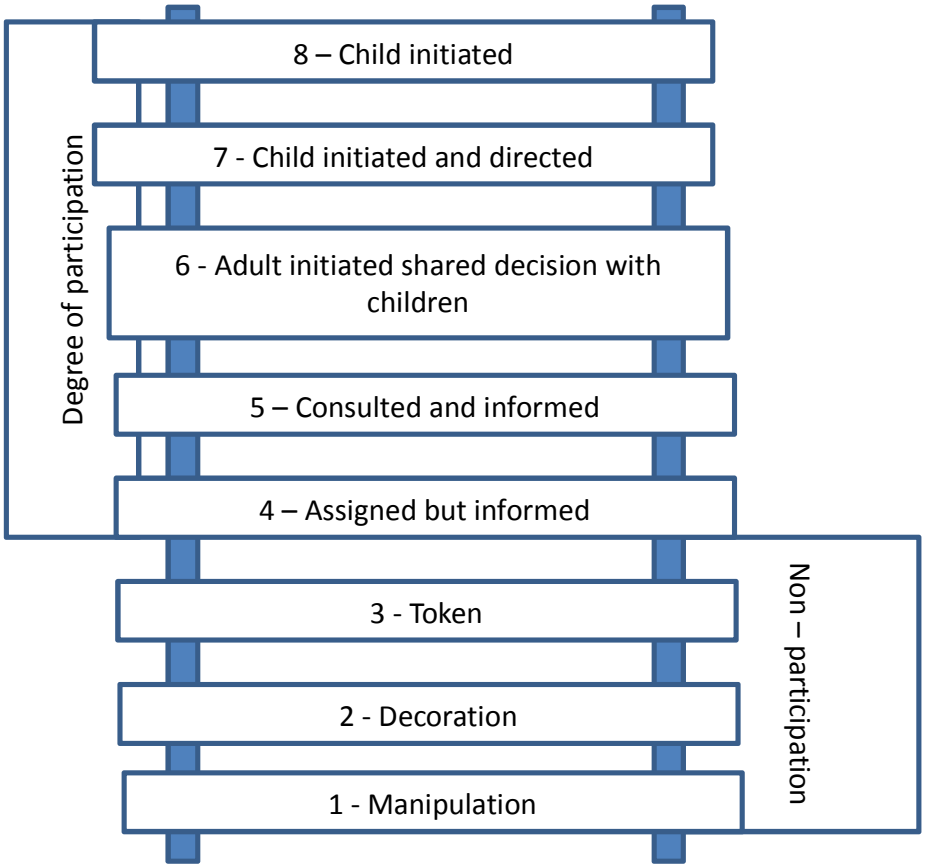
Youth participation is about the real influence that young people have on institutions and decisions, not about their passive presence as human beings or service recipients (Checkoway and Gutiérrez, 2006). On the other hand, youth participation in decision making processes is seen as a way of averting risky behaviors (Roebuck, Brookman and Tepper, 2004). This argument is supported by Howe, Batchelor and Bochynska, (2011) who argues that youth participation in community activities extends youth citizenship rights. Middleton (2006) sums it up by arguing that most of the definitions of 'youth participation' focus on involving the youth on issues that affect their lives.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children and youth the right to have a say on matters affecting their lives (UN, 1989). Following the adoption of this Convention, Kara (2007) argued that youth are now regarded as partners with adults in policy arenas. According to Finlay (2010) it is important that young people are empowered to have a voice in decision-making processes. She argues that the people in positions of power should incorporate others in decision-making processes. The idea is to create a sense of empowerment among the disadvantaged groups most notably the youth. One way to do this is through organized youth programs. Such programs serve as context in which the youth are connected to resource bearing adults (Jarret, Sullivan and Watkins, 2005).

Youth development programmes differ in how much input in terms of decision making is from adult versus youth (Larson, Walker and Pearce, 2003). At one extreme are programmes that are controlled by adults with little input from the youth. At the other extreme are programmes that are controlled by the youth with little influence from adults. Towards the middle of this continuum are approaches where adults exercise greater control. These approaches are called adult driven whilst on the other side are approaches where youth exercise greater control but adults play supportive roles as mentors and facilitators (ibid). These are called youth driven approaches. Youth participation theories fall into these two categories namely, youth-driven and adult-driven approaches (Larson, Walker and Pearce, 2003; McMurray, 2006). In its analysis, this study will compare the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches. The youth driven approach allows young people to initiate programmes, share decisions with adults (Hart, 1992; Province of Nova Scotia, 2009). According to Hart (1992) adult driven models take the

forms of manipulation[3], decoration[4] and tokenism[5]. McMurray (2006) argues that there is no participation in the adult driven approaches as the intent by adults is to use young people in the pretense that these causes were inspired by young people themselves.

[3] Manipulation – a situation where young people are consulted but not given feedback (Hart, 1992)
[4] Decoration – situations where adults use young people to bolster their cause in a relatively indirect way (Hart, 1992)
[5] Tokenism - instances in which children and young people are given a voice, but in fact have no little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little on opportunity to formulate their own opinions (Hart, 1992)



Source: Adapted from Hart's Ladder of Participation

Hart (1992) refers to the last five rungs of his ladder as participatory where the youth take control of initiating and implementing the programmes with the assistance of adults. On this part of the ladder Hart discusses young people as being knowledgeable of what is happening around them. Since the aim of this study was to explore the challenges the youth face in participating in decision making processes, it was desirable to familiarize with the factors affecting youth participation under both approaches. According to Larson et al. (2003) neither of these extremes provides an affective model that works best over the other in the implementation of youth development programmes. It is therefore argued that a youth programme increases its chances of success, efficiency and relevance if it engages young people in its programming, including design, implementation and evaluation (USAID and Equip 3, 1999). They go on to argue that youth participation on this ladder depends on how much adults are willing to cooperate in form of partnerships with young people.

According to Zeldin and Petrokubi (2006) the notion of youth driven approach is difficult to operationalize as in most cases it lacks supportive policies. They give an example of the United

States, which signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 in 1995 but failed to ratify the Convention. On the other hand, the notion of an adult driven approach has been criticized for failing to acknowledge youth capabilities. Against this background, Checkoway and Gutiérrez (2006) advocate for youth participation programmes to include:

- efforts by young people to plan programmes of their choice;
- adults involving young people in their programmes; and
- youth and adults working together as partners.

They argue that the issue is not whether the programmes are led a by a certain group: either youth, adults or intergenerational; but rather whether young people have impact on the programmes.

2.2.2. Social Capital Theory

Social capital is another theory that has been looked at in this study. The theory has been conceptualized differently by various scholars, however common amongst the definitions is that social capital is viewed in terms of the potential resources that society or networks have and how these can benefit young people (Bourdieu, 2008; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). It is argued that at the core of conceptualization of social capital by Bourdieu, Putnam and Coleman is the idea of social capital as social relationships that entail the transfer of resources and provide positive benefits (Jarret, Sullivan and Watkins, 2005). Svendsen (2001) defines social capital as a collective good that benefits persons other than the individual producer himself including those whom the producer does not know. He further argues that Putnam's work looks at social capital as a substance that can be quantified. Putnam demonstrates this in his two major works, Making Democracy Work (1993) and Bowling Alone (2000). In both books the primary objective was to measure social capital in terms of an increase in civic involvement. The absence of social capital was indicated by a decline in civic population's social activities. Putnam goes on to conclude that an increase in civic involvement signifies the high presence of social capital. According to Tenney and Hanquinet (2012) a large stock of social capital makes the coordination and communication within society easier, leading to a higher level of social trust.

Smith (1999) argues social capital serves as an important resource in the socialization of politically relevant norms and behaviors including the desire to cooperate for the benefit of society through participation in political and civic activities. In this study social capital will be looked at in terms of the potential gains that social networks have for the youth. Smith (2010) argues social capital is produced through relationships with family members as well as others outside the family. In this regard, young people should be connected to their families and societies. Young people who feel valued and are provided with the right opportunities for participation are less likely to be disengaged (Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth, 2008). It is argued that young people who are alienated from the institutions that provide the opportunities to develop the skills are at greater risk of poor health and social problems. Another argument of Smith (2010) is that low social trust, low participation and low engagement in civic life threaten the foundations of a democratic society. It is therefore necessary that young people should be involved in decision making processes that affect their lives as their involvement helps to improve outcomes for youth development such as building confidence, improving behavior and enhancing leadership skills (Gyamfi, Keens-Douglas and Medin, 2007). In other words, the involvement of young people in decision making processes prepares them for the future.

2.2.3. Governance Theory

The term governance is used in a variety of ways and has a variety of meanings (Carrington, DeBuse and Lee 2008; Stoker, 1998). These authors argue that the theory of governance depends on context. Literature on governance is eclectic and disjointed (Stoker, 1998) and its theoretical roots are various: institutional economics, international relations, organizational studies, development studies, political science, public administration and Foucault – inspired theories. Merlin (2003) highlights three governance theories namely: organizational; cultural; and structural functional. This study is premised from an institutional economic theory as well as the cultural theory. The former theory argues that governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action as critical to the success of the programmes (Stoker 1997). Merlin (2003) using a cultural theory describes a “traditional way of life” as including: the sanctification of customs, beliefs, and practices and emphasis on authority by birth rather than merit among other things. In this particular study emphasis will be on how societies have come to institutionalize the relations between adult and youth in which the adults assume dominance over the youth. According to Merlin’s cultural

theory, the relations between adults and youth are seen as a traditional way of life that cannot be challenged.

Kelly (2010) argues that historically the youth has occupied the 'wild' zones. In these zones certain groups of young people are considered ungovernable and lacking in self-regulation. Against this foregoing, Bessant (2003) argues that despite a lot of official talk about youth participation that characterize recent official policy documents, little is done to promote the increasing democratic participation of young people. It is however, noted that despite the rosy picture painted on democratic participation of young people, what most policies offer are ways that perpetuates the governance of young people (Bessant, 2004). She asserts that an analysis of the official youth participation agenda reveals there is considerable talk about democratic practice, but a failure to acknowledge the existing barriers to young people. Youth participation is confined to specific issues that do not challenge the political power of policy makers. In view of the foregoing, it is observed that governments are unwilling to put in place legislation or other policy frameworks to ensure that what young people want is not overridden by adults. Thus, Governments throughout the world are eager to put in place practices that engage or consults the youth on matters that that the youth will not hold dissenting views. Often times in situations where governments or adults consult the youth no feedback is provided.

2.3. Policy Framework embracing Youth Participation in Decision-Making Processes

Just like any human being that enjoys universal rights and freedoms, children rights are embedded in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959. This Declaration marked the first major international consensus on the fundamental principles on the rights of the child. The Declaration, however, lacked emphasis on children participation and therefore, for a long time children and the youth were sidelined from taking a role in matters affecting their lives (Hart, 1992).

It should be noted, policies that help to promote democratic participation of young people enhances their citizenship status (Bessant, 2003). However, it has been indicated under item 2.2.3., that most governments fail to put in place policies conducive for youth participation in decision making processes. Farthing (2010) notes that in the field of politics this is simply because young people are seen as problematic. Thus, society and adults have come to snub youth from participating in political decision-making processes as they are considered immature.

It is argued that despite a lot of talk about participation little is being done to promote, or to create regulatory reforms that would result in substantive youth participation in decision-making process (Bessant, 2003).

Legislation to make youth participation in decision-making processes mandatory may not be appropriate according to the argument by Kirby and Bryn (2002) in their three cultures of participation which was discussed under item 2.2.1., for the following reasons:

- First, the youth focused organization calls for societies or communities to take heed of all decisions made by the youth. This practice is against the theory of social capital as it undermines the potential resources that young people may enjoy from their engagement with adults;
- Second, the participation focused organization targets a small section of the youth population thereby lacking the spirit of inclusiveness; and
- The consultation focused has its own shortfalls in that the youth are not guaranteed of meaningful engagement. Young people benefit from relationships with a range of adults outside the family (Jarret, Sullivan and Watkins, 2005). They argue that these relationships provide the resources and benefits of social capital that helps the youth to transition into the adult world. According to Jarret et al., (2005) the youth are still learning and putting legislation on youth participation mandatory would only jeopardize this learning process as most youth would opt for youth focused programmes as it gives them autonomy. Such autonomy may end up being abused in the name of democracy and human rights. It is however, necessary to have legislation that mandates communities to develop youth programmes that advocate for youth-adult partnerships. It is argued that through these partnerships the youth will be socialized into shared norms, encouraged to develop meaningful social roles, and be prepared for leadership position within their communities (Jarret et al., 2005).

Youth participation should therefore be viewed as part of the inputting processes into the decision making processes. Globally, the discourse of youth participation in decision-making came into existence following the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 (Middleton, 2006; Rimmer, 2011). The Convention's Article 12 (1) is specific on participation:

> *State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child*

given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child (UNCRC, art. XII. cl. 1).

In Africa, the discourse of youth participation was reinvigorated by the adoption of the African Youth Charter in 2006 (AU, 2006). Similarly, Article 11 (1) of the African Youth Charter states that:

Every young person shall have the right to participate in all spheres of society (AYC, art. XI. Cl. 1.).

Hart (1992) faults the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 for failure to articulate issues of participation. O'Donoghue et al., (2003) argues that if participation is to be effective it must be entrenched in institutions that influence young people's lives every day. This implies that at an institutional level, institutions need to mainstream youth participation issues in their programmes.

2.4. Benefits of Youth Participation in Decision-making Processes

This section sets out to highlight some of the benefits of youth participation in decision-making processes. The argument advanced is that if programmes on youth participation in decision making processes are to succeed societies need to be enlightened regarding the possible benefits of engaging the youth in decision-making processes. Jarret et al., (2005) argue that the lack of contact between youth and community adults manifests itself in negative attitudes, beliefs and behavior's directed by adults towards young people. It is observed that the youth notice these harmful perceptions which eventually fuel negative view on adults and reinforce their detachment from adults. Literature highlights the need for youth to increasingly become active participants in decisions that affect their lives (Howe, Bachelor and Bochynska, 2011). This view suggests that involving the youth in decision-making processes benefits societies in terms of their contributions and energies. The following were highlighted as some of the benefits:

- At a family level, McMurray (2006) discusses the benefits the family gets from youth participation in terms of increased understanding between family members. It can be argued that due to increased relations within the family, young people are free to give their opinions and so their parents; and

- At an individual level, youth confidence is enhanced and they value the impact they have on other people's lives (Alliance for Youth Executive Officers, 2003).

O'Donoghue et al., (2003) highlighted the following benefits:

- Increased interest to take part in decision making processes among the youth;
- Changes in organizational climate and deeper commitment by adults to youth and development principles; and
- Fostering democratic habits such as self-expression and cooperation in youth.

Gyamfi et al., (2007) highlighted the following benefits for youth involvement in decision making processes that affect their lives:

- Youth develop positive relations with adults, learn new skills and feel affirmed by their contribution towards the economy;
- Youth develop pride, self-esteem, feel empowered and are able to push for their voices to be heard; and
- Families view their children as robust and competent individuals who can stand on their own.

This section has argued that youth participation in decision making processes is beneficial to the individuals and their families. At the level of an individual, participation nurtures the capabilities for future contribution towards their economies. At the family level, participation is conceived as a yardstick for measuring competences levels.

2.5 Challenges the youth face when participating in decision-making processes

Research carried out worldwide has shown that the youth face challenges when participating in decision-making processes (Macleod, 2009; Moonga, 2007; Murray and Hallet, 2000; O'Donoghue, Kirshner, McLaughlin, 2002; Peteru, 2006; Sorensen, 2006). Examples of such challenges include adult perceptions of youth as an immature group of people, lack of access to economic resources and inexperience by the youth in handling decision-making processes. This study discusses these challenges by organizing them into the following categories: structural; legal; economic; cultural and demographic.

2.5.1. Legal and Policy Challenges

As discussed earlier (see page 1), the global policy instrument on youth participation is the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention mandates member states to take a proactive approach to give the youth space in which they can give voice to issues that affect their lives. The Convention is however faulted for failing to emphasize the responsibilities that go along with the rights (Hart, 1992). Bessant (2003) blames the lack of legislation in many jurisdictions as being the major challenge for youth participation to gain ground in the democratization of the political processes. It should be noted that much as the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 acknowledges the importance of youth participation, the same Convention gives discretion to member states to put in place appropriate implementation strategies. Article 4 of the Convention reads:

> *States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the Rights recognized in the present Convention with regard to economic, social, and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources, and where needed, within the framework of International Cooperation (UNCRC, art. IV).*

The above article though important is deficient in that it is not legally binding and is therefore difficult to enforce as it provides an 'out' through determination of 'available resources'. Thus nations may choose not to provide to the maximum extent of their available resources as legally the provision is not binding. Many organizations that have promoted youth participation have had to battle with the challenge of an enabling legal framework to make their resolutions binding.

The literature argues that policies and practice on youth participation in decision-making processes fail to address a variety of discriminatory practices that frustrates young people to act as good citizens (Bessant, 2003). These include structural, cultural and economic challenges.

2.5.2. Structural Challenges

Structural challenges in the context of the literature on youth participation refer to systemic barriers experienced in the course of representing other people. Sorensen (2006) in a study on

the participation of Australian youth at roundtable forums found that the whole concept of representative status was problematic. Participants at roundtable forums were not elected by the people they were claiming to represent. In this particular case the participants were only delegates as they were appointed by the bureaucrats and therefore could not claim to represent the views of all young people. McClelland (1996) tries to differentiate between a delegate and a representative as follows: a representative is one chosen by constituency and has right to claim representative status. A delegate on the other hand is not elected by the constituency and cannot claim representative status. McMurray (2006) argues that often youth participation in community activities - particularly political activities - is controlled by adults. Youth from rich backgrounds are more likely to be nominated to represent their peers at such forums. Thus, youth from remote areas are more likely to be left out due to difficulties to reach them as well as their lack of knowledge on national issues. Since these youth are selected by the bureaucrats then they may not claim to represent others from their constituents.

Sorensen (2006) in her study argued that government controlled the selection processes in order to minimize dissent so as to allow its programmes to run smoothly. It was further noted that government controlled other things like the media protocol, media access to information, and agenda setting (Sorensen, 2006). These manipulative tendencies left participants at the round table forums disillusioned. It was felt that despite their appearances at roundtable forums many youth felt excluded from the programmes. Sorensen's study reveals a number of structural challenges the youth face in participating in decision-making processes in that largely it is either governments or adults that determine the nature and outcome of programmes. The youth are employed to endorse what is already planned for by the adult designers of programmes It should be noted that what the youth want is what Hart (see figure 1.0) presents in his ladder of participation i.e. youth participation should move from the position where adults design programmes on behalf of the children and young people as represented on the ladder through the first three rungs. It is assumed that the children do not know what is good for them, and as a result adults take charge to protect their interest. In the latter part of the ladder, Hart makes reference to young people. He sees this group of people as being informed. The last five rungs on Hart's ladder represent increasingly active young people's participation. This is the position where the youth aspire to be especially on rung 8 where they initiate programmes and share decisions with adults. In many instances this situation is difficult to operationalize. Achieving substantive youth directed decision making and agenda setting is compromised by making youth participation a part of an adult-driven decision making structure.

2.5.3. Cultural challenges

The concept of culture is diverse and differs from society to society. In studying culture and its effects on youth participation in decision-making processes it is important to take cognizance of this diversity because what works in one society may fail in another. Culturally, adults perceive youth as disrespectful (Hogeveen, 2006). Thus, adults see youth as not intelligent and mature as adults themselves and therefore unfit to take part in the decision making structures. For this reason, adults establish youth forums largely because they are perceived to provide tangible opportunities deemed appropriate to enable ongoing participation by young people rather than because of demand from young people themselves (Youth Coalition of the Act, 2010). In a study that was carried by Peteru (2006), he argued that the authorities within the youth councils did not support youth participation beyond certain levels. Peteru (2006) found that young people were considered to have diminished capacity within their society. This was largely a result of adult perception of the youth, which became part of the culture of their organizations. Macleod (2009) supported this argument as he argued that young people neither had capacity nor willingness to participate in the political activities of their country. Macleod however went on to explain that this was due to failure by societies to carve out the specific roles required of youth involvement.

2.5.4. Economic Challenges

Traditionally, children and youth have been regarded as dependents. This has resulted in them being classified as second class citizens. Due to their low status in society, youth have failed to make meaningful contribution towards decisions affecting their lives. Finlay (2010) argues that youth participation in decision-making needs to be meaningful. In reality this has however proven to be difficult as the youth still face challenges to access economic resources to fund their activities despite the Convention on the Rights of the Child calling upon member states to invest heavily in matters of young people and children. Macleod (2009) found that lack of economic resources was a significant barrier to youth participation in the work of parliamentary committees. Similarly, lack of economic resources also affected the work of organizations that sought to convey the views of young people to parliament. Sorensen (2006) found that government was willing to fund the youth only on matters that government had interest.

According to Franklin and Slopper (2008) lack of training for staff development and resources were some of the challenges that hampered the support for children and young people's

participation. Likewise young people need support and training if they are to participate meaningfully. Peri (2007) argued that in their participation at the Vaughan Youth Cabinet the youth faced transportation problems as most of them relied on public transport. This according to Bessant (2003) was a result of high levels of unemployment that ensured that young people were located in the margins of economic activities and participation.

Another challenge that youth face due to their low position in society is the lack of premises to conduct their business. Often they have to borrow conference venues from adults and sometimes they fail to meet because their programmes collide with those of adults.

2.5.5. Demographic Challenges

Youth are like any other citizens with rights in the process of learning how to practice their citizenship (Peri, 2007). It is therefore the responsibility of their particular societies to provide them with a safe environment and the tools needed to practice that citizenship. The Alliance of Youth Executive Officers (2003) argued that a community is developed in as far as its members are involved in the affairs of the community irrespective of age. Often the youth are excluded from participating in decision-making processes because of age as they are perceived immature (Hogeveen, 2006). Hogeveen further argued that adults derive their authority to control the youth from the social order i.e. they are the spokespersons of the dominant order and are unwilling to relinquish the power. He goes on to say that in the western world age is seen as currency and those that have accumulated a lot of years consequently inherit cultural capital and so it is difficult for children to break into the power structures dominated by adults. Moonga (2007) and Peteru (2006), highlights age as a major barrier to youth participation in decision-making processes.

2.6. Emerging insights

In this study, the literature review has considered four theories that apply to youth participation: youth driven; adult driven; social capital; and governance. The literature review has articulated that youth participation in decision making processes is a fundamental right to citizenship. Youth participation has been viewed as the real influence of young people in decision making processes that affect their lives. It is argued that youth participation helps to avert risky behaviors and that it is beneficial to the youth and their communities.

Literature has also shown that youth participation in decision making processes works best in the presence of an enabling policy and legislative framework. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 has been cited as the global instrument that gave rise to the concept of youth participation in decision making processes.

In terms of classification of the approaches associated with youth participation, two theories were highlighted. These are the youth and adult driven approaches. The literature however indicates that when discussing the concept of youth participation in decision making processes, it does not matter whether the programmes are led by a certain group of people be it youth, adults or intergenerational but rather whether the youth have impact on the programmes.

The theory of social capital puts emphasis on the relationships between youth and society. Proponents of this theory argue that the youth stand to benefit from their engagement with adults both within the family and outside the family. The literature has argued that youth engagement in decision making processes helps to prepare them become better citizens.

The theory of governance was perceived as a medium of perpetuating adult control on youth participation in decision making processes. Literature has shown that in terms of policy development little is being done by governments to promote youth participation in decision making processes.

On possible benefits for youth participation in decision making processes, literature shows that societies benefit in terms of youth contributions and energies. The following were highlighted among the benefits:

1) increased relations within the family;
2) openness amongst family members;
3) enhanced confidence; increased interest among youth;
4) changes in organizational climate and deeper commitment by adults to youth and development principles; and
5) fostering democratic habits such as self-expression and cooperation among the youth.

As mentioned earlier, the lessons from other countries as articulated in the literature review has provided the analytical framework for assessing youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament as presented in the table below. The status quo of Malawi on the challenges faced by the youth in participating in decision making processes will be measured against the experiences from other parts of the world as articulated in this chapter.

2.6.1. Analytical framework

Table 1.0. Analytical Framework

THEORY	ISSUES	MEASUREMENT	AUHTORS
Youth Driven	Ownership	Whether the programmes are owned by youth or adults	Larson and Walker (2005), Province of Nova Scotia (2009), Zeldin and Petrokubi (2006), Zeldin, Petrokubi and Camino (2008)McMurray (2006) Finlay (2010) USAID and Equip 3 (1999) Checkoway and Gutiérrez (2006)
	Empowerment	Are the programmes meant to empower young people	
	Leadership skills	Do youth have enough leadership skills to implement the programmes	
	Engagement	Are youth meaningfully engaged	
	Confidence	Do youth have the confidence to participate	
	Involvement	How much involvement are youth given	
	Support	What level of support are youth given	
	Connection	How are the youth connected to resource bearing adults	
	Influence	Do youth influence decision making processes	
	Resources	Do youth have access to resources	
Adult Driven	Empowerment	How much empowerment does adults give the youth through youth programmes	Larson and Walker (2005), McMurray (2006) Hart (1992) Finlay (2010) Jarret, Sullivan and Watkins (2005) USAID and Equip 3 (1999)
	Engagement	How do adults engage the youth	
	Support	What kind of support does adults give to the youth	
	Facilitation	Does adult facilitation of youth programmes necessary	
	Influence	How do adults influence decision making processes in youth programmes	
	Trust	What level of trust does adults have on youth	
Social Capital	Relationships	Type of relationship between youth and adults	Bourdieu, (2008), Putnam, (1995;

	Resources	What type of resources do youth benefit from adults	2000), Coleman (1988), Portes (2000), Jarret, Sullivan and Watkins (2005), smith (2010) Svendsen (2001) Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, (2008) Gyamfi, Keens – Douglas and Medin (2007) Tenney and Hanquinet (2012)
	Social trust	How much trust is there between adults and youth	
	Networks	What type of networks does exist in societies	
	Involvement	How much does adults involve youth in decision making processes	
	Norms	Clearly developed norms and practice	
Institutional economic and cultural theories of governance	power	How much power does one group have over the other in a relationship	Stoker (1998), Carrington, DeBuse and Lee (2008) Merlin (2008) Kelly (2010) Bessant (2004)
	Influence	How much influence is allowed	
	Customs	What are the customs of a particular society?	
	Beliefs	What are the beliefs?	
	Practices	What are the practices?	
	Age	Does age matter in the relations between adults and youth	

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical framework that formed the basis of the literature review. The theoretical framework discussed the following theories:

1) Theories on youth participation (i.e. youth and adult driven) highlight the need for youth involvement in matters affecting their lives. The two theories recognize that youth participation in decision making processes is a fundamental right to citizenship;
2) The social capital theory on the hand illustrates the importance of young people connecting with the elderly. The theory has argued that young people stand to benefit from their engagement with adults. It has also argued that the engagement of young people in decision making processes helps to prepare them as better citizens; and

3) The theory of governance was perceived as a means of perpetuating adult control over the youth in decision making processes.

The above four theories provide the literature that draws from international experience. The literature argue that youth participation in decision making processes is part of the youth citizenship rights and therefore society should strive to promote the concept.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided literature that informs the complexities of youth participation in decision-making processes. This chapter examines the methodology used in the study. The expectation was that the interviews with respondents would provide information that would address the knowledge gap on youth participation in decision-making processes.

This chapter will therefore outline a detailed research framework and design of the study. It also gives an overview of the research methods and justification for the approach adopted by the study as well as the practical experiences of the researcher in the field.

The chapter further elaborates the following: data collection methods; sampling approach; validity and reliability; ethical issues; data analysis and limitations.

3.2. Research Paradigm

Quantitative Research uses experimental methods to test hypothesis (Hoepfl, 1997). The approach is centred on the causal relationships between variables (Denzil and Lincoln, 1998). This methodology limits participants' responses as they are responding to a standardized instrument. The challenge with such an approach is that it is difficult to tell whether the designed instrument will measure what it is intended to measure. In addition, it is limited in terms of its ability to explore values and norms and how lived experiences impact on the issues under review.

Against the above background, this study opted for a qualitative research approach. The main characteristic of a qualitative research is that it seeks to understand a phenomenon in its real life setting. According to Leedy and Ormrod (1985), the qualitative approach collects numerous forms of data and critically analyses them to construct meaning out of the complex situation. It uses data collection and analytical methods that are non-statistical in nature. Qualitative research takes a descriptive approach. Neuman (2011) argues that qualitative studies measures with alternatives to numbers. The process is more inductive, in that measuring and the creation of new concepts is done simultaneously with the process of data collection.

Neuman (2011) further argues that in qualitative research as data is gathered, the researcher tends to simultaneously reflect on it and generate new ideas. It is these ideas that provide direction and suggest new ways of measuring data. In turn the new ways to measure shape the way on how additional data is collected. Neuman provides a comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative research methods as described in table 1.0., below.

The intention of this study was to explore the challenges the youth face when participating in decision making processes, and in the process develop a rich and descriptive narrative on their lived experiences in the process of being part of the Malawi Youth Parliament. The qualitative method of research was deemed appropriate as the researcher had the opportunity to interact with youth parliamentarians and their coordinators. Both of these groupings of people were ideal as they could provide first-hand information.

3.3. Research Design

This research used a non-experimental case study approach, which enabled the research to obtain detailed respondent perceptions on the challenges the youth face when participating in parliamentary decision making processes. Myers (2009) highlights the following advantages with regard to case study approach:

1) A case study approach gives real life stories that most researchers can attest to; and
2) Allows researchers to explore or test theories within the context of real life situations.

In this study, the case boundary was the Malawi Youth Parliament. The study was non experimental as respondents were not categorized into test and control groups. The researcher was involved throughout all the processes from conception to dissemination of the findings. A qualitative methodology utilizing an interview schedule and document analysis was adopted. The interview schedule was used to obtain first-hand information through face to face interviews with the respondents. Interview interaction with respondents provided the opportunity to further probe on the challenges the youth face when participating in decision-making processes at the Malawi Youth Parliament.

At the time of making appointments for interviews, the researcher found that an official from UNICEF was not available for interviews. An arrangement was made to send the official a questionnaire. A separate questionnaire that was tailor made was dispatched and the official responded accordingly. In addition the official agreed that if there were any issues that needed

clarity the researcher was at liberty to contact the official. As part of data collection, official documents were analysed for purposes of enriching the research.

The study used semi structured questionnaires for data collection, which appears as appendices 2, 3 and 4. The questionnaires were pretested within the Researcher's Hall of Residence at Wits University prior to being administered. The piloting of the questionnaire allowed the researcher to approach the research in a more realistic way as it discovered that some issues that the researcher thought were given did not occur to others in this way. The researcher in this situation had to clearly clarify the questions. According to Myers (2009) a semi structured questionnaire has the following advantages:

1) first, it gives the researcher some structure and ensures that the information collected across the sample is comparable;
2) second, it allows some improvisation as it gives the interviewee the opportunity to add important insights as they arise during the course of the conversation;
3) third, previously prepared questions provide the interviewer with focus; and
4) Lastly, semi structured interviews allowed the researcher to triangulate on issues raised in previous interviews thereby increasing the credibility and validity of the results.

Information from the interviews was collected by way of recording. During the interviews the researcher came across new information that was not envisaged at design stage. This development resulted in the researcher seeking clarification from other respondents. Additional interviews were held with an Official from the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports, and another with one of the young female youth parliamentarian to verify certain information. On the other hand, the use of a semi structured questionnaire allowed the respondent in this case an official from UNICEF the freedom to freely express himself in response to the questions through a written submission.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using semi structured interviews; a questionnaire in the case of the failed interview with an official from UNICEF; and using observation and document analysis.

3.4.1 Primary Data

Being a qualitative study, the researcher was central to the data collection process. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Primary data from the interviews was recorded and later transcribed. The interview process gave the researcher the opportunity to probe for clarifications. As already highlighted under item 3.3., data from the UNICEF official was collected through a questionnaire that was tailor made, based on the semi-structured interview schedule. Other sources of primary data included policy documents, Acts of Parliament and the Parliamentary Hansards.

3.4.2 Secondary Data

In this study secondary data came from official documents such as UNICEF publications, newspaper articles, internet downloads and the parliamentary news bulletin.

3.5. Sampling Approach

The Malawi Youth Parliament has a total population of 193 members. Out of these six participated in the study. Three officials from UNICEF, Malawi Parliament and the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports also participated in the study. In total, the research had a sample size of nine respondents. The respondents in this research were selected using nonrandom purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was ideal in this research as respondents were selected on the basis that they would be informative to the research. Merriam (2009) argues that purposeful sampling is ideal as it aides the investigator to discover, understand and gain insight by selecting a sample from which the most can be learned. Four of the nine participants were females. The criteria for selection of the Members of the Youth Parliament did not take into account of their experience on parliamentary business as the Youth Parliament has officially been in existence for less than a year.

Section 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi condemns discrimination on the basis of tribalism, nepotism and ethnicity.

> *This Constitution is founded upon the underlying principles:*
>
> *(iv) the inherent dignity and worth of each human being requires that the state and all persons shall recognize and protect fundamental human rights and afford the*

fullest protection to the rights and views of all individuals, groups and minorities whether or not they are entitled to vote;

(v) as all persons have equal status before the law, the only justifiable limitations to lawful rights are those necessary to ensure peaceful human interaction in an open and democratic society (Malawi Consti. Chap. III. Sect. 12 cls. (iv) & (v)).

In the process of selecting participants for the study the above characteristics did not feature. Participants were chosen on the premise that they are knowledgeable with regard to parliamentary decision making processes as well as being a target group. The youth parliamentarians were selected on the basis that they are a target population, whilst the youth coordinators from Parliament and UNICEF were selected because of their involvement with youth parliamentarians. An official from the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports was included in the sample because of the role played by the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports in the operationalization of the Malawi Youth Parliament. This research did not attempt to judge the recruitment process as to whether the members of the youth parliament were appropriately selected to their positions.

Below is a table 2.0., showing how sampling for the study was done.

Name	Type of Participant	Age group	Gender	Selection procedure
Respondent A	Youth parliamentarian	15 – 19 years	M	Identified as a target and also due to gender
Respondent B	Youth parliamentarian	Below 15 years	M	Identified as a target, gender as well as age
Respondent C	Youth parliamentarian	20 – 24 years	F	Identified as a target and also due to gender
Respondent D	Youth parliamentarian	20 – 24 years	F	Identified as a target and also due to gender
Respondent E	Youth parliamentarian	20 – 24 years	F	Identified as a target and also due to gender
Respondent F	Youth parliamentarian	15 – 19 years	F	Identified as a target and also due to gender
Respondent G	Official	20 – 24 years	M	Targeted because of his involvement with the youth parliamentarians
Respondent H	Official	Above 30	M	Targeted because of his involvement with the youth parliamentarians
Respondent I	Official	Above 30	M	Targeted because of his involvement with the youth parliamentarians

Source: Authors own

3.6. Interviews

Face to face individual interviews were held with most of the identified respondents. Neuman (2011) describes the 'conversational interview' as a collaboration encounter in which the interviewer adjusts interviewing questions to the understanding of specific respondents but maintains the researcher's intent in each question. Through a collaborative encounter between the researcher and the interviewees, detailed information on the challenges that the youth face when participating in decision-making processes at Malawi Youth Parliament was explored.

The youth parliament met from 10th to 11th December, 2012 at the Parliament Building in Lilongwe. As data gathering coincided with the meeting of the Malawi Youth Parliament, it was easy to arrange the interviews. Before the interviews efforts were taken to establish rapport with the respondents. A briefing session was held with all participating youth parliamentarians. The session was aimed at informing the respondents of the purpose of the study and to assure them of their confidentiality throughout the research. For purposes of anonymity, pseudonyms have been used in this report. However, actual names of participants are available and have been submitted to the supervisor.

The researcher sought permission to record the interviews. All the participants agreed to be recorded. The interviews were later transcribed. Separate questionnaires were used during interviews for youth parliamentarians and the youth coordinators respectively, in order to capture the different lenses these groups wear when dealing with issues of youth participation in decision making processes.

3.7. Documentary Analysis

A document analysis was performed on a range of documents which included official documents such as the Terms of Reference for the establishment of the Malawi Youth Parliament, Parliamentary Hansards, Newspaper articles, policy documents, and organization publications. Document analysis assisted in providing information that would have been omitted from the interviews and other forms of data collection.

3.8. Observations

In addition to primary and secondary data, the researcher observed parliamentary proceedings. Merriam (2009) argues that the process of collecting data through observation can be broken into three stages i.e. entry, data collection and exit. Entry into site to observe data is considered as the most difficult part. Being an employee of Malawi Parliament the researcher was privileged to observe the proceedings of the Malawi Youth Parliament live. The researcher observed that many youth parliamentarians were failing to articulate issues due to language problems and lack of knowledge.

3.9. Validity and Reliability

Research is never complete without looking into issues of reliability and validity of data gathered. Merriam (2009) argues that regardless of the type of research (i.e. qualitative or quantitative) validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, interpreted and the way in which the findings are presented. Neuman (2011) argues that it is not possible to have a perfect reliability; however these are the ideals towards which research should strive. Neuman (2011) describes reliability as dependability or consistency, whilst validity suggests truthfulness.

In order to attain both validity and reliability, the research used both primary and secondary data to ensure a deeper understanding of challenges experienced by the youth in participating in decision-making at Malawi Youth Parliament. As already highlighted, primary data were collected from interviews using a semi structured questionnaire and other policy documents, whilst secondary data was collected from academic papers, journal articles, books, official documents and research papers. The main advantage with primary data collected from interviews was that it was easy to triangulate the findings across respondents.

The questionnaire was piloted to ensure that the questions were clearly articulated. For purposes of crosschecking information gathered during interviews, the researcher recorded all the interviews, which were then transcribed. The transcribing assisted in preventing distortion of information by the researcher. During data analysis, the researcher was at liberty to go back to the respondents to verify information and check with other respondents.

As the research sample is not representative of all youth parliamentarians, the findings of this study cannot be generalized. However, the results will be used to explore the challenges experienced by the youth in participating in decision-making processes in the Malawi Youth Parliament.

The intentions to have validity and reliability exercises were to check on the truthfulness and consistency of the study. Merriam (2002) argues that the following methods can be used for this purpose.

Table 3.0: Strategies for Promoting Validity and Reliability

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Triangulation	Using multiple investigators, sources of data or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings
Member checks	Taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if they are plausible
Peer reviews/examinations	Discussions with colleagues regarding the process of the study, the congruency of emerging findings with raw data and tentative interpretations
Researcher's position or flexibility	Data is presented by means of exact figures gained from precise measurement
Adequate engagement in data collection	Adequate time spent collecting data such that the data become saturated; this may involve seeking discrepancies or negative cases of the phenomenon
Audit trail	A detailed account of the methods, procedures and decision points in carrying out the study
Rich thick description	Providing enough description to contextualize the study such that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situation matches the research context and hence whether findings can be transferred

Source: Merriam (2009)

The above strategies were adopted in this study as follows:

1) In this study triangulation was achieved through the various data collection methods that were adopted. These are the semi structured questionnaire, observation of the youth

parliament proceedings by the researcher, a questionnaire that was sent to an official from UNICEF and document analysis.

2) During the interviews the researcher agreed with the respondents that in case of any classification the researcher would seek clarification of the respondents. This strategy was also used.
3) Sufficient time was allocated for data collection which was held throughout the month of December 2012 and part of January 2013. The period was adequate enough for the researcher to familiarize with data.
4) This Research Report has an abstract that adequately addresses the major highlights of the study.

3.10. Ethics

Ethics relates to appropriateness of the researcher's behavior in relation to rights of those who become the subjects of a study or are affected by it (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). No ethical issues were dealt with as the research was not dealing with vulnerable youth groups. All the youth that participated were able to make decisions. Participants were given the liberty to participate or withdraw from the research. All participants were assured of confidentiality and for purposes of anonymity only pseudonyms are used in this report.

3.11. Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) defines data analysis as the process of making sense out data collected. According to Merriam data analysis is intended to answer the research question. Data analysis was one of the complicated stages of this research. Preliminary analysis ran simultaneously with data collection. This gave the research focus and it also allowed the research test new data gathered in the course of data collection. For instance, in the process of data collection it transpired that questions relating to policy and legislation could be well articulated by the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. Additional interviews were therefore arranged with an official from the Ministry. Similarly, during the interviews the researcher learnt that some youth parliamentarians were young to comprehend the proceedings of the House. Additional interviews were also arranged with one young female to verify this claim.

The analysis of this qualitative case study involved coding data into themes or concepts. Myers (2009) views codes as words that are used to describe or summarize a sentence, a paragraph

or even a whole piece of text such as an interview. In coming up with the themes, the research adopted an inductive approach: that is the researcher gathered data to build concepts, hypotheses or theories.

In the process of reviewing literature this study came up with an understanding of the themes (see page 11). In chapter five the study has adopted similar themes with additional themes (see page 71) that have been added following the analysis of the Malawi case data.

3.12. Limitations

The following are the limitations of this research:

- First, it should be noted that the researcher's background as staff of the parliament of Malawi may have influenced his thinking as well as the analysis. In this regard, the researcher would like to make it clear that it was never at any point the intention of the researcher to twist the findings of the research. As someone working for the parliament, I always thought that the youth would be happy to participate in the youth parliament as the opportunity offered a platform on which they could give voice to issues that affect their lives. I was however surprised to note that the most of them were not happy with the operations of the youth parliament as it did not meet their expectations. I had in mind that the majority would jump at the opportunity of being a member of the youth parliament and that the concept of youth parliament as a mechanism for taking parliament to the people would be easy to popularize. I suspected there were challenges the youth were facing when participating in decision making processes, however I underestimated the complexity and magnitude of the challenges; and
- Second, the whole project is worth 25% mark of the Masters of Management in the field of Public and Development Management. This implies that the research has length and sample limitations.

3.13. Conclusion

The chapter outlined the research methodology adopted by the study. The study adopted a qualitative methodology. This methodology was found ideal as it was expected that it would provide rich source of information. The chapter has also highlighted how subjects to the study were identified, data collection methods and data analysis. It also discussed issues of validity and reliability.

The proposed qualitative exploratory study explored the challenges facing the youth in Malawi in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes despite the country's ratification of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child that gives children powers to speak on issues that affect their lives in an open manner. The study also explored which of the challenges are more prominent. Lastly, the study explored the existence of policies that addresses the challenges.

The target population in this research constituted youth parliamentarians, officials from Parliament, UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. Primary data were collected using semi structured interviews, a questionnaire, and document analysis. A semi structured questionnaire allowed the researcher to probe and prompt for clarifications. Further primary data came from policy documents, pieces of legislation and the Hansard. Secondary data were collected from sources such as official documents, parliamentary bulletin, media reports, UNICEF reports, journals, books and online publications.

The next chapter will present the data that was collected using the methodology highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents data collected from interviews with key informants, document analysis, observation, and questionnaire. The key primary data source however, was interviews with key informants. The interviews were aimed at gathering data on the challenges the youth in Malawi face when participating in parliamentary decision-making processes, and in addition explored informants' level of knowledge on the prevailing policies guiding youth participation in decision making processes. Further information was sought on the type of institutional support as well as personal effort on the part of youth parliamentarians required to overcome the challenges that were identified in the process of data gathering. In the process of the interviews, rapport was established between the researcher and the participants in an attempt to give participants a sense of involvement in the study.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, a questionnaire was also used to collect primary data in the case of the interview which could not take place with an official from UNICEF. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it could offer the respondent the liberty to freely express himself.

In addition to the interviews, observation was used to collect primary data. On the 10th and 11th December 2012, the researcher attended the proceedings of the youth parliament. The recordings from this observation have been included as primary data for this research. Primary data was also collected from document analysis, including the Parliamentary Hansards, Order Papers, Terms of Reference for the operationalization of the Youth Parliament and the Malawi Republican Constitution.

4.1.1. Background of Respondents

This section provides a background of the participants in the study. It is in the nature of qualitative research using narrative enquiry is that the issues that emerge from the data is a reflection of the participants that were involved (Merriam, 2009).

Five males and four females participated in the research. Six of the nine participants were youth parliamentarians (i.e. four females and two males). The other three were a coordinator from the Malawi Parliament, one from UNICEF and an official from the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. As discussed in the methodology chapter, respondents in this study have been given pseudonyms for purposes of confidentiality and anonymity. This section will present brief profiles of the participants using the pseudonyms. The participants' pseudonyms are ranked alphabetically from Respondent A to I. When referencing the respondents, the narrative will acknowledge their gender, so they will be referenced as Ms. A or Mr. B, and so on. Actual names of participants have been submitted to the Supervisor. Each profile will be structured as follows:

- Who the participant is, his or her Constituency.
- His or her education background
- Age
- Home area

1) **Respondent A** is a youth parliamentarian from Lilongwe Central Constituency. She is a secondary school leaver. She is 19 years old and hails from an urban location. In this study she is referred to Ms. A.
2) **Respondent B** is a youth parliamentarian from Phalombe North Constituency. She is twelve years old and in Form 1 (Grade 9) of her secondary education. She hails from a rural location. In this study she is referred to as Ms. B.
3) **Respondent C** is a youth parliamentarian from Lilongwe Nkhoma Mpenu Constituency. He is twenty two years old and school leaver. He comes from a rural location. In this study, he is referred to as Mr. C.
4) **Respondent D** is a youth parliamentarian from Karonga North West Constituency. She is 23 years old and has a Diploma in HIV and AIDS from Mzuzu Technical College. She comes from a rural location. In this study, she is referred to as Ms. D.
5) **Respondent E** is a youth parliamentarian Nkhatabay North West Constituency. He is 24 years old and a secondary school leaver. He hails from a rural set up. In this study he is referred to as Mr. E.
6) **Respondent F** is a youth parliamentarian from Balaka Central Constituency. She is an undergraduate at a Malawian University. She is nineteen years old and she comes from an urban location. In this study she is referred to as Ms. F.

7) **Respondent G** is a youth coordinator from Malawi. He has Diploma Certificate and he lives in the urban location. His is in his twenties. In this study he is referred to as Mr. G.
8) **Respondent H** is an official from UNICEF. He has Degree qualification. His age is over 30 years and he lives in the urban location. In this study he is referred to as Mr. H; and
9) **Respondent I** is an official from the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. He has Degree qualification. He is above 30 and lives in an urban location. In this study he is referred to as Mr. I.

4.2. Benefits of Youth Participation in decision making processes

It is important at this point to understand what youth participation in decision making processes entails and how these bring a focus to Malawi Youth Parliament activities. Issues that brought insights on the subject matter include literature on youth participation in decision making processes and the participants' experiences. A specific question on benefits for youth participation in decision making was not put across to the participants. However, the youth respondents when responding to the question regarding their understanding of the concept of participation alluded to benefits accruing from participating in the parliamentary decision making processes. According to the youth respondents participation was viewed differently and was associated with words like 'involvement', 'taking part in community activities' and 'contributing to issues in the youth parliament'. The youth respondents regarded participation as a vehicle for their connection to the wider youth society. Some felt that due to their participation in the youth parliament their popularity and confidence levels had grown. As a result some of them were positioning themselves as possible candidates for the 2014 parliamentary general election. Already some of them were appealing to organizations for support.

> *… at first when I told people that I had succeeded and that I will be representing the youth in my constituency at the youth parliament most of the people doubted me but after attending the first session the perception changed. Already people are encouraging me to stand as a Member of Parliament during the general elections so much so that if my name will not appear on the ballot papers during the next general elections (in 2014) many people will be disappointed (Mr. C, December, 2012).*

If there are some other organizations to support youth parliamentarians I welcome such an initiative. If possible I am ready to stand as a member of parliament in 2014 but that will depend on the availability of funding (Mr. C, December, 2012).

Others felt that their participation in the youth parliament warranted them to such benefits like scholarships to further their studies (see item 4.6).

… So if there can opportunities for youth parliamentarians to have the scholarships or whatever they can be assisted with so that when there term expires they should say one time I was a youth parliamentarian and this is how I benefited (Mr. E., December 2012).

One youth respondent indicated that she would have loved if parliament had considered in terms of lifetime recognition by giving the youth parliamentarians certificates to improve their Curricula Vita (see item 4.6).

This being only for two years I think parliament should consider in terms of recognition in our lifetime that can improve our CV may be it can help (Ms. F., December 2012).

A specific question on the type of benefits that the youth parliamentarians were enjoying in the processes of their participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament was never asked. However, this research found that youth parliamentarians receive allowances that are paid when a youth parliament is meeting. It was however observed that youth respondents wanted more benefits over the allowances. Some of them mentioned scholarships and loans, which were difficult to access given their situation that they were not salaried officers and their contract was only for two years. Perhaps the only reason, they could be given some of these benefits was their ability to have demonstrated good citizenship. In view of the foregoing, it can be argued that the youth parliament would generate more interest for youth participation.

For the Malawi Parliament, youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament was seen as a strategy for achieving the strategic objective of taking parliament to the people which is part of the Malawi Parliament Strategic Plan (Mr. G, December 2012). It was reported that parliament wanted to expose young people to practical experience of participation in the youth parliament (Mr. G, December 2012). It was indicated that this was the reason why the structure of the Malawi Youth Parliament was modeled along the structure of the Malawi Parliament. In total, the youth parliament has 193 members whose tenure of office is two years. The term of office was

deliberately reduced from five years as is the case with main parliament to two years to allow more youth to participate in parliamentary decision making processes in a short period of time

In summary, participation in the case of the youth in the Malawi Youth Parliament was regarded as a way of fulfilling some personal goals among them the ambition to become Members of Parliament. Others thought this was the best way they could get connected to the adult world and have access to opportunities in the form of certificates, scholarship and grants which they could use in their future world. On the part of parliament authorities, youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament was regarded as a means of taking parliament to the people as articulated under the Malawi Parliament Strategic Plan 2010/2015. On the other part of providing monetary assistance towards those members of the youth parliament who would like to compete during the 2014 general elections, parliament authorities disassociated themselves from such a move.

> *In terms of funding for 2014 since some of them are eligible to campaign and strive for membership to the main parliament it's not up to the youth parliament or parliament to fund for their campaign that is another side of politics… (Mr. G, December 2012).*

4.3. Challenges facing the Youth in Participating in the Youth Parliament decision making processes

As discussed under item 1.1., youth participation in parliamentary decision making processes is part and parcel of the Malawi Government's drive to promote citizenship rights of the youth. This study however revealed that despite the programme being implemented with the blessings from the government the youth face challenges when participating in decision making processes. When asked whether the Malawi youth Parliament was having any challenges, both adults and youth respondents agreed that the youth parliament was experiencing challenges. However, perceptions on the challenges differed between the adult and youth respondents. The following were identified as some of the challenges:

4.3.1. Policy framework embracing Youth Participation in decision making processes

When asked about their knowledge on policies that embrace youth participation in decision making, there was a range of responses. Four of the youth respondents singled out the African Youth Charter. Four of the, talked about the draft national youth policy. Two expressed ignorance on what policies are. This division on the responses provided the opportunity for

further analysis on the effect of demography on youth participation in decision making processes. Those ignorant of what policies attributed their ignorance to the absence of information in the rural areas.

> *I can't say that I know what policies are, as you know I come from a rural area and information there is scarce. May be my coming to Parliament will help me to know more (Mr. C, December 2012).*
>
> *I don't know what policies are (Ms. B, December 2012).*

The orientation programme covered the following topics: overview on the functions of parliament; rules of procedure; election of office bearers of the House; identification of key topics for debate during plenary; and protocol and etiquette. Unfortunately for these respondents the orientation programme did not cover issues to do with policy and legislative framework in which they are supposed to operate. In this regard, one could not blame those youth parliamentarians for feigning ignorance on what policies are considering the manner in which the orientation programme was conducted. A parliamentary officer whilst commenting on the issue admitted that the orientation programme was not adequate. He indicated that since that was the first time parliament was conducting such an exercise parliament had learned a lot from the exercise and that future programmes would benefit from that experience (Mr. G., December 2012).

Those from the urban locations had this to say:

> *I only know about the African Youth Charter (Ms. A. December 2012)*
>
> *We've been talking about the youth policy which we have been fighting for and they say it's in draft form since 2007. For now, we don't have a policy on youth and the president promised us that it's going to be reviewed by January2013. I think things will change when we have a policy adopted (Ms. A. December 2012).*
>
> *The policy is there because I saw it I saw the draft of the policy. I was just informed that the policy was adopted but I am not sure if it was adopted (Mr. E, December 2012).*

The claim that policies are not available in rural areas was however dismissed by the authorities in the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports who indicated that Malawi is a signatory to the African Youth Charter and that the Ministry had distributed copies of the Charter in all the districts throughout the country.

Malawi ratified the charter. It was done through a presidential directive by our Ambassador in Ethiopia. Recently the Ministry has been involved in distributing copies of the charter in all the districts (Mr. I, December 2012).

An official from the Ministry of Youth indicated that the Malawi Youth policy is under review to incorporate issues of youth participation in decision making processes.

… to start with the Ministry does have a national youth policy of 1996, one which was developed and launched by the former Head of State, Dr. Bakili Muluzi in 1996 and we have been using that policy up to now but it was realized that the policy needed to be reviewed and it was reviewed. We have a draft policy which in the year 2004 was almost ready for adoption by the cabinet but because time elapsed people feel that it needed to be reviewed again and put in more information on issues that affect the youth today… (Mr. I, December 2012).

When youth parliamentarians were asked whether they were satisfied with the execution of their responsibilities within the provisions of the existing policy and legal framework, all of them bemoaned their limited mandates. They indicated that upon ascendancy to the office of the youth parliamentarian they were ordered not to conduct public meetings or carry out other activities in the name of parliament as doing so would imply campaigning. The youth parliamentarians felt they were being denied their constitutional right to associate with others.

Every person shall have the right to freedom of association, which shall include the freedom to form associations (Malawi Const. chap. IV art.32. cl.1)

Many youth claimed their status as well as recognition by the constituents was negatively affected as the youth did not know of their existence and consequently that of the youth parliament.

…not many people know us because we were given limits on how to operate…we were told that we are representatives of fellow youths from our constituencies but we cannot operate like how Members of the main Parliament operate as they are able to conduct rallies, bring together people in the communities and speak to them. On the other hand,

we were not given that opportunity as the only people we can mobilize are the youths through channels like Youth Clubs[6] (Ms. F, December, 2012).

This research found that the absence of a national youth policy complicated matters in as far as youth parliamentarian mandates were concerned. The study also found that the Malawi Youth Parliament does not have its own guidelines for operations. As a result the Malawi Youth Parliament uses the Parliamentary Standing Orders, which were developed for the main parliament. It was however noted that the Terms of Reference for the Malawi Youth Parliament provide for the development of separate guidelines for the Malawi Youth Parliament.

Also complicating things were matters concerning global instruments, which while they recommend for member states to take action, do not bind member states to take specific actions. Middleton (2006) argues that youth participation in decision making processes was triggered by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). World-wide, youth participation in parliamentary decision making processes is part of the global campaign to involve young people in matters affecting their livelihoods. The campaign is championed by the International Parliamentary Union through a resolution that adopted in 2009 requiring all its member states to establish national youth parliaments as a way of giving voice to youth issues in parliamentary decision making processes.

In addition to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Youth Charter and the International Parliamentary Union resolution, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has articulated the importance of involving the youth in decision making processes. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association demands annual progress reports from national parliaments. Similarly, a conference for youth parliamentarians is held annually to allow the youth exchange views on matters affecting their lives (Malawi National Assembly, 2011). This research however found that the prevailing international instruments are not binding and most of them tend to give leeway in terms of their implementation, which often dilutes the whole purpose of the instruments.

In Malawi, the need to establish a youth parliament was stipulated in the Malawi Parliament strategic Plan 2010-2015 (MNA, 2011). Prior to August 2012, when the Malawi Youth Parliament was launched, UNICEF coordinated the child parliament. Since 2001 to 2011, eight session of the child parliament were hosted (MNA, 2011). However, deliberations from the child

[6] Youth clubs – A place where young people meet and participate in activities that designed to keep them from the street

parliament were not filtering into the main parliament as there was no direct linkage between the two institutions. Though the Malawi Parliament was a major stakeholder in the operations of the child parliament there was no policy or legislation necessitating the latter to consider the resolutions of the child parliament as part of the main parliament agenda. The child parliament on the other hand was perceived to have many deficiencies such as poor quality of debate, time limitations and failure to articulate issues (MNA, 2011). Consequently, the youth parliament replaced the child parliament with the hope that it would articulate issues better than the child parliament had been able to (Mr. G. December 2012).

In summary, this section has argued that effective youth participation in decision making processes requires appropriate policy and legislative frameworks (Bessant, 2003). In Malawi, there seems to be confusion as regards to the issue of an enabling policy in that currently the national youth policy is under review. Indications are that the 1996 policy is still being used whilst in some instance people are using the revised policy which is not yet approved by cabinet. It was however reported that the 1996 national youth policy lacks on issues of youth participation in decision making processes. The study found that those that prefer the revised policy do so as they believe it is in line with contemporary developments on youth participation as articulated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. The study further found that due to the absence of a national youth policy the country does not have a legislation advocating for youth participation in decision making processes.

4.3.2. Insufficient Funding for Parliamentary Business

All the youth respondents indicated that the lack of funding for the activities of the Malawi Youth Parliament affected their work. As youth parliamentarians, they were supposed to interact with young people in their constituencies in order to collect and present the views of the constituents at the youth parliament. In some instances this required funds for them to reach out to youth in hard-to-reach areas.

> … *It's not easy for us to communicate with all youth clubs; we need transport and the like so that needs funding. At least Parliament should improve on that funding aspect so that we can reach those youths in remote areas as these are the people that mostly need help from us* (Ms. *F, December, 2012).*

Ms. D. concurred with Ms. F. on the concern for lack funding and went ahead to appeal to government to look into the problem.

… government should give us money so that we can interact with young people in youth clubs (Ms. *D, December, 2012).*

Parliamentary authorities concurred with the youth respondents on the lack of funding (Mr. G, December 2012). It was reported that the problem of insufficient funding on the part of parliament was a result of the activities of youth parliament not being included in the 2012/13 budget of parliament. Parliament was actually squeezing itself in order to operationalize the youth parliament. It was further reported that the parliamentary purse would not suffice to meet the cost of running a youth parliament and therefore a partnership between parliament and other cooperating partners was set up (Mr. G, December 2012). The partnership involved the Malawi Parliament, UNICEF[7], Timveni Media[8] and Plan Malawi[9] with the possibility of incorporating more stakeholders in future. An Officer in the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports agreed with the youth respondents on the lack of funding. He indicated that the Ministry's District Youth Officers (DYO) were supposed to assist youth parliamentarians in mobilizing young people for consultations at constituent level. However, this was not happening..

To begin with the DYO are mostly involved with the work of youth parliament….. When the youth parliament is about to meet, it's the DYO who assists with the communication. Mostly communication is a challenge and the DYO are closer to the youth parliamentarians. Secondly, when youth parliamentarians are coming for a session he or she shouldn't just come without consulting constituents hence the role of DYOs to mobilize fellow youth. Maybe the process has not been deep rooted but we are in the process of facilitating that process that when the youth parliamentarians are coming for a session there should be a forum where the youth parliamentarian should consult the constituents… (Mr. I, December 2012).

Inadequate funding also affected the duration of meetings. In 2012, the Malawi Youth Parliament met twice. According to the Terms of Reference for the Malawi Youth Parliament, meetings of the Malawi Youth Parliament are planned for a three day session, preceded by a two day orientation period held twice a year (MNA, 2011). The first meeting of the youth parliament took place in August 2012. This meeting was for five days with the first three days being used for orientation. It is doubtful whether the orientation period was adequate as gaps

[7]Unicef – United Nations Children's Fund working in the field of child and youth rights
[8]Timveni Media – a local NGO working in the field of youth media
[9] Plan Malawi – An International Organization working in the area of Child and Youth Development in Malawi

were noted from the many mistakes that youth parliamentarians made on the floor in the course of business (Researcher's observation, December 2012). Most of these gaps could be linked to the inadequate orientation which the youth parliamentarians had. It was reported that the orientation was particular on parliamentary practice and procedure.

> *At the moment the only challenge that we seem to have is the in the knowledge of what they seem to be discussing however, the debates are comprehensive but still not as comprehensive as we would like them to be (Mr. G, December 2012).*

The second meeting took place in December 2012. The meeting was planned for five days however; the orientation programme this time was omitted. This research found that only after two days, the meeting was adjourned as parliament did not have enough resources to continue with the meeting (Mr. G. December 2012).

This research also found that plans to implement training programmes through the orientation window were being shelved due to lack of funding. Parliamentary authorities however indicated that Parliament is discussing with other stakeholders to join hands (Mr. G. December, 2012).

According to the Terms and Reference for the operationalization of the Malawi Youth Parliament, the latter was expected to constitute Committees (MNA, 2011). The exercise of establishing House Committees was implemented again due to lack of funds.

Finally, communication was another area that was affected by the inadequate funding. It was noted that some of the youth parliamentarians did not have mobile phones. The majority of them received the messages through District Youth Officers. It was also noted that some of them came from areas where the cellular/ mobile network was a problem and therefore District Youth Officers had to travel by public transport to deliver the invitations. The District Youth Officers were however not being funded for these activities. This research found that most of the youth received communication for meetings late and were therefore unable to consult their constituents.

In summary, this section has argued that lack of funding towards youth parliamentarians' activities denied them the opportunity to interact with other youth. It resulted in early adjournments of meetings. Lack of funding also affected the activities of District Youth Officers who were supposed to facilitate the activities of youth parliamentarians. Because the Malawi Parliament failed to allocate sufficient funds to the operation of the Youth Parliament, it has had to partner with other cooperating partners in order to sustain the programme.

4.3.3. Insufficient time to transact Parliamentary Business

When asked what they thought about time for transacting business in the youth parliament, all youth respondents indicated that the time allocated for debate in the House was inadequate. As the youth parliament has a total of 193 Members, it was reported that it proved difficult for the Speaker of the House to recognize everyone who wished to contribute. It was indicated that some of the youth parliamentarians had not yet spoken in the House. Failure to catch the Speaker's eye to contribute could be looked at in two ways. First, failure to speak because of the large numbers of youth parliamentarians needing to contribute in a relatively short time; and second, those failing to contribute may be at a disadvantage due to language challenges.

> *For one to get a chance to speak it is tough. Another challenge is that some of the youth parliamentarians are young and sometimes they feel shy and sometime they have nothing to say (Mr. C, December, 2012).*

> *... we are a number of us. If you want to be recognized and express the views, the problems, you think your constituency is facing it's so hard since we're a number of us (Ms. F, December, 2012).*

> *… It is but just that we don't have enough time because we are so many so everybody needs to voice out their concerns (Ms. D, December, 2012).*

> *… the other challenge we meet is n that we don't have much time to discuss the issues. The issues that we sometimes discuss are sometimes coming from other stakeholders and not the youth (Mr. E, December, 2012).*

Parliament authorities concurred with the youth respondents on the inadequate time for parliamentary business. In particular they pointed that the time allocated for orientation was not adequate.

> *In terms of orientation since it was our first youth parliament we developed our evaluation form and from that evaluation form we got responses as to how the orientation was conducted and whether the youth really understood what was being presented to them and we sought guidance on what topics we should introduce in the future for the orientation to be better. In terms of the number of days it was quite constraining that we were not able to have thorough orientation but that would be looked into in future… (Mr. G, December, 2012).*

As mentioned earlier, during the 2nd meeting of youth parliament that was held from 10th to 11th December, 2012, the meeting was planned for five days but because of financial constraints *(*Mr. G, December, 2012*)* after two days, the meeting was adjourned without giving due consideration of the seriousness of the agenda (Researcher observation, December 2012).

In summary, lack of time to transact business in the youth parliament made life difficult for the youth members as they had to compete to catch the Speaker's eye to be given the floor to contribute. The study also found that parliamentary proceedings were being disrupted due to inadequate funding.

4.3.4. Agenda Setting

When asked about who sets agenda for youth parliament, two conflicting views came up. All the youth respondents stated that they were not sure as to how the agenda for their meetings was set. Two of them suspected the influence of other stakeholders outside the Youth Parliament to have played a major role on agenda setting. It was reported that during their first meeting it was understandable for the authorities to set the agenda as the youth parliamentarians were new and had no leadership but during the second meeting they were surprised to get the Order Paper detailing business to be transacted (Ms. A, December 2012). It was further reported that this was happening even though the Right Hon. Speaker of Parliament had promised during the first meeting that the youth parliamentarians would discuss issues affecting their lives and that they would set their own agenda.

> *…. We need to find the agendas ourselves and not Parliament identifying them for us because there are pertinent issues that we need to discuss in the House but Parliament does not include them on our agenda (Ms. D, December 2012).*

This research did not attempt to find out the specific issues that the youth would want to discuss. The research however found that the common challenges experienced by the youth in Malawi include:

- Early marriages;
- Drinking alcohol and drug abuse;
- Involvement in sexual behaviors which may result in contaminating HIV and AIDS;
- Excessive Smoking.

On the other hand the authorities indicated that agenda for youth parliament was determined by the Steering Committee with the input of the youth (Mr. G, December 2012). It was indicated that the following Ministries and Departments comprised the membership of the Steering Committee:

1) Parliament as the host institution;
2) Minister of Youth Development and Sports;
3) Minister of Gender, Child Development and Community Development;
4) Minister of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly;
5) Minister of Education, Science and Technology;
6) Minister of Local Government and Rural Development; and
7) The National Youth Council of Malawi (Mr. G, December 2012).

The Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament chairs the Steering Committee. It was indicated that the Steering Committee was supported by a Technical Committee. Membership of the Technical Committee mirrored that of the Steering Committee; however the former was composed of Officials from the above Ministries and Departments. It was reported that even after the youth parliament was fully operational the task of agenda setting would remain the responsibility of the Steering Committee *(*Mr. G, December 2012). In this regard, the arrangement would be for the youth parliament to submit their proposals to the Technical Committee, which would look at them and recommend to the Steering Committee (Mr. G, December, 2012*).*

The study found that the absence of offices for the leadership of the youth parliament within parliament buildings affected youth parliament leadership in that they could not sit and plan on behalf of the youth parliament.

> *I think the best way is for those in authority to allow young people in leadership positions have information. I would have loved if these leaders had their own offices so that they could make decisions on behalf of youth parliament and the latter would be an independent programme (Ms. A December, 2012).*

When asked whether the Malawi Parliament intended to create offices for the youth parliament leadership, parliament officials did not have an answer to the question but only hoped that the issue could be considered in future.

In summary, this study found that though the Youth Parliament was promised that it would set its own agenda, this responsibility remained the sole responsibility of the adults through the

Steering Committee. The arrangement was that the youth would submit proposals to the Technical Committee for consideration. The Technical Committee would in turn submit the proposals to the Steering Committee. This study also found that the absence of offices for the leadership of youth parliament within parliament buildings made it difficult for the youth parliament to have total control of the agenda setting. Twice it was observed that when youth parliamentarians were arriving for their meeting's agenda was already set for them

4.3.5. Power imbalance between Adults and Youth

It should be noted that respondents were not specifically asked anything related to how they related as adults and youth. However, certain elements of power imbalance between the two camps kept coming in the course of the interviews. Many of the youth respondents bemoaned the tendency by adults to not take them seriously. The authorities concurred with the youth on this. They indicated that Malawian culture believes that children are there to be served and provided for and this begins at a family level:

> *… In Malawi most young people do not participate in decision making processes right away from the family in the communities and even in the work places including in development programmes and projects. I think culturally Malawians believe that young people are there to be served to be provided for with their means and services and even decisions regarding to what they get should come from adults. That attitude is embedded in most of us so right away from home we see mother and father sitting down in the bedroom deciding what they should do for the family and whatever most of the decision are made by the parents. So that goes up to different levels of community level when they are deciding for development projects for the community be it at village development committee level, area development committee level traditional authority level and district level. Most of the decision making bodies at district level do not include young people in decision making so it's only now that the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports with other stakeholders have started advocating for the inclusion of young people in the decision making bodies. Young people in most cases do not participate… (Mr. I, December 2012).*

Assurances were given by the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports that it is looking into the issue of integrating the youth in decision making structures (Mr. I, December 2012).Youth are seldom involved in decision making processes as traditionally adults have dominated this

sphere. Adults have over time considered youth as immature and not fit for decision making positions. As a result, the youth have ended up being excluded from these positions. This perception has been institutionalized and the end result has seen many organizations failing to accommodate young people in decision making structures.

When asked about on how they relate with their Members of Parliament from their Constituencies most of the youth respondents reported that Members of Parliament shun them. Two youth respondents indicated that they had made efforts to get in touch with their Members of Parliament but their efforts were futile. This is despite parliament informing its Members of Parliament of the existence of a youth parliament. The rest indicated that when they contacted their Members they were promised an audience, which did not materialized.

> *… we have got no relationship with my senior Member of Parliament …this other time I was calling her but she did not pick up my call. I wanted to meet with her and tell her some of the problems that we are meeting as youth in my Constituency but she did not pick up my phone (Ms. D, 11th December 2012).*

> *… there is no connection between a Member of Parliament for my constituency and myself. As a youth parliamentarian I feel like he has a negative attitude towards me because I have tried to phone him but he never responds to my calls (Mr. E December 2012).*

Similarly, it was observed during the November 2012 sitting of the main Parliament that some Members of Parliament were not amused by the selection of youth parliamentarians as they look at them as adversaries. One youth respondent reported that a Member of Parliament queried the selection of youth parliamentarians during the November 2012 sitting of Parliament.

> *… For example I can give the example of certain member from Msozi North Constituency who was questioning the selection of youth parliamentarians and he argued like … do you want us to compete or what do you want us to do? … (Mr. C, December 2012).*

Some youth respondents reported that government ought to make good use of the youth parliamentarians as the youth constitute the larger part of Malawi's population and that most of them have good qualifications. It was noted that despite some of the youth having good qualifications they were still sidelined from decision making processes due to their lack of experience.

I would like to add that I really wish the government should take advantage of us as young parliamentarians so that we can help other young people because we do have a lot of young people who are lacking resources and mostly people don't know that yes we do have a ministry of youth development and sports but mostly it focuses on sports and all that instead of helping young people who have nothing to do. We do have young people who are educated and have degree certificates but the majority is illiterate so I would love if government were to take us seriously (Ms. A, December 2012).

It was reported that political systems do not embrace the notion of youth participation and involvement (Mr. H, January 2013). Politicians have always regarded decision making as the domain of the elderly. Where the youth have been involved, they have ended up being abused as part of the paramilitary wings of political parties carrying out operations that are aimed at silencing opponents. Most of these operations are atrocious in nature (Phiri, 2000).

Traditionally, Malawian youth have grown up in a cultural environment that does not tolerate openness between adults and youth and this limits youth participation even when they are incorporated in decision making processes most of them lack the confidence to articulate issues (Mr. I, December 2012).

In summary, this section has argued that traditionally, Malawian youth have grown up in a cultural environment that does not tolerate openness between adults and youth and this has resulted in young people's confidence being eroded. As a result, adults perceive the youth as immature and ones not ready for decision making positions. The study has found that the establishment of the youth parliament has strained the relations at constituent level between Members of Parliament and youth parliamentarians. It was indicated that the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports together with other stakeholders is working towards changing the mindset of people by advocating for youth inclusion in decision making processes.

4.3.6. Inability to Communicate Effectively

Officials from Parliament indicated that debate in the youth parliament was not up the level they wanted. This concern was shared by some of the youth respondents.

We have others who are 12, 13, and 14, who are failing to contribute. Others are standard eight (Grade 8). They fail even to speak English, may be they succeeded

during the interviews because they were no other contestants to compete against (Mr. C, December 2012).

This research found some linkage between age and language. It observed that most of the youngest parliamentarians who were either in primary or junior secondary school could not comprehend the proceedings of the House. The research found that the youth parliament uses English as the official language of communication, and that many youth could not clearly express themselves in this second language (Researcher's observation, December 2012). To verify this claim, an interview was held with one female youth parliamentarian aged 12. This youth parliamentarian was doing her first class in the junior secondary school (equivalent of Grade 9).This young member reported that her selection was based on the following characteristics; one that she was female and the other was that she was young. Surprisingly, in this Constituency all her competitors were pupils from primary school. In total there were 3 candidates who competed. Reasons were not given as to why secondary and tertiary students were not involved in this constituency. Through the interviews this research observed the general problem with Malawian pupils in that most of them cannot speak and write good English until they attend secondary and tertiary education. Officials from parliament agreed with the researcher's observation when they reported that debate in the House was not comprehensive as they would want (Mr. G, December, 2012).

The research also found that at the time of her selection, the young member was living in her particular constituency with her family. Later the family moved to another district so that she was only available in the constituency during school days as the school is located in the Constituency. It was observed that due to her family relocation she had problems in engaging with her constituents.

In summary, the research found that age and language was linked to participants' ability to participate in decision making processes because younger parliamentarians had problems in keeping up with the debate in the House as proceedings were in English.

4.3.7. Lack of Recognition at the Community Level and at Youth Level

When asked as to whether they are recognized as youth parliamentarians two different views came out. Four of the youth respondents indicated that they are well known as youth parliamentarians. The remaining two blamed the limitations on their mandates as negatively

affecting their recognition. Recognition in this study has been looked at two levels namely: at community; and at youth level.

4.3.7.1. At the Community Level

This research found that the selection of youth parliament by the bureaucrats affected their recognition amongst community members as well as fellow youth. This study found that the selection process was silent as many people did not participate. Communication for the interviews was through the word of mouth and some adverts were posted at the District Commissioner's Offices. When asked how the youth parliamentarian got communication for the interviews there was confusion on how the selection process was administered in different places. Some of the youth respondents indicated that they were approached by the District Youth Officers to collect forms and thereafter they went for interviews. One youth respondent indicated that she was targeted by the District Youth Officer because previously she was active in youth activities (Ms. A, December 2012). Others had to compete in an essay writing competition before taking part in the interviews. One of those who competed in the essay competition indicated that he was approached by authorities in the Ministry of Education (Mr. C, December 2012).

On the part of the communities, it was noted that they were not well informed about the roles of youth parliament. Many had misconceptions about the whole concept of youth parliament and did not like the youth members parading as youth parliamentarians. Most of them thought they were 'de-campaigning' their Member of Parliament whom they had elected and one whom they had political ties with (Mr. C, December 2012). One could speculate that the majority of those who held such opinions were probably supporters of political parties from where the respective Members of Parliament came from. The whole misconception resulted in communities not supporting the activities of the youth parliament. As a result the youth felt disenchanted with some nearly giving up.

> *Adults are not supportive especially those in political parties. They say we are de-campaigning their Members of Parliament (Mr. E, December 2012).*
>
> *... there have been a number of times that I feel like giving up because I do feel like young people are not appreciated. It's like adults take advantage of us and mostly when we are invited to events it's just for people to see that they are involving young people when in reality young people's voices are not taken seriously (Ms. A, December 2012).*

4.3.7.2. At the level of fellow youth.

The youth looked at the limited operating mandates as hampering their recognition. Every one of them blamed the curfew that was given by the parliament authorities as contributing to their little recognition.

> *…not many people know us because we were given limits on how to operate…we were told that we are representatives of fellow youths from our constituencies but we cannot operate like how Members of the main Parliament operate as they are able to conduct rallies, bring together people in the communities and speak to them. On the other hand, we were not given that opportunity as the only people we can mobilize are the youths through channels like youth clubs (Ms. F, December 2012).*

Since the youth parliamentarians were not elected by the youth population some of their colleagues looked at the whole concept of youth parliament as more of tokenism.

> *… most young people do have a negative attitude towards youth parliament. It's like they think that the government is just taking advantage of us and I remember somebody saying that Malawi has a youth parliament just because they want to be known internationally that they have a youth parliament but then our voices are not been taken seriously and our resolutions are not being implemented… (Ms. C, December 2012).*

When asked whether they were satisfied with the selection procedure nobody amongst the youth respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the procedure. Everyone was happy to have to have gone through the interviews as it demonstrated how good they are in English despite some calling for a change in the selection procedure.

> *…I was happy just because it was a proof to myself that I am better in English because what they wanted was how one speaks or write in English… (Mr. C., December 2012).*

Those who advocated for a change did not provide an alternate selection process but were more concerned with the flaws of the interview process as they thought the bureaucrats could manipulate the process. For instance one youth respondent when answering a question on whether she felt there were some youth parliamentarians who made into the House because of relations had an affirmative yes.

Some of the youth were chosen because they were related to the officials (Ms. D., December, 2012).

In summary this section notes that the local communities did not understand the role of youth parliament. This was the more reason why there was suspicion between Members of Parliament and members of the youth parliament. As noted earlier on Members of Parliament were not amused with the selection procedure for youth parliamentarians (see item 4.3.5.). The local communities thought the youth parliamentarians were competing against their Member of Parliament whom they had duly elected. On the part of the youth, they felt that their colleagues participating in the youth parliament were being abused by government for it to be seen to be in agreement with international declarations. As regards to the selection procedure almost all of them were happy for having passed the interviews as it indicated how good they were at speaking or writing English. Besides being happy some felt the procedure needed to change as it could abused by the bureaucrats considering that even those who could not speak and write English made it into the youth parliament.

4.4. Ranking of the challenges in the order of greatest to least.

When asked to rank the challenges in terms of greatest to least, there was no consensus on either sides (i.e. adults or youth). Some of the youth respondents indicated insufficient time to debate the issues followed by inadequate resources to conduct consultations as major challenges

"The biggest challenge is one on how to choose the one to speak on the floor... (Mr. C, December 2012).

The major challenge is that as a young person mostly it's very hard to communicate and mobilize young people in the constituencies. People underestimate us just because we are young. Some people do not respect us… (Ms. A, December 2012).

Our coming here is to present the issues but if I don't have the access to get the issues what am I going to present in the house (Mr. E, December 2012).

In the eyes of one youth respondent the challenges were equal and no need to rank them.

There *is no one that I would rate least because all of them are of benefit to the youth of this country and the population as a whole (Ms. D, December 2012).*

Thus, youth respondents were very much concerned with issues that affected their participation in decision making processes. On the other hand, the adults were concerned with structural issues of incorporating youth in decision making processes. According to an Official from UNICEF, failure by political systems to embrace the concept of youth participation or involvement was ranked the greatest (Mr. H, December 2012). This touched on the notion of adult perception of youth as having no part in decision making processes.

> Youth perceive politics as a career for adults and that they do not have a part to play *(Mr. H. January, 2013).*

The UNICEF official went on to argue that the above perception of the youth affected their participation and integration into decision making processes.

The official from UNICEF indicated that there was need to build capacity of youth parliamentarians on rights issues. It was hoped that such a training programme would help to change the mindset of the youth on politics so that they may realize that they have a right to participate and contribute towards the national development agenda. He also indicated that UNICEF was committed to supporting the youth parliament for as long as it continued to support child rights promotion in the country. He further reported that youth awareness of policies that embrace the concept of youth participation was relatively low due to the fact that many youth are not interested in politics limits their interest in reading the policies. Similarly, it was indicated that many policies have been developed but they have not been disseminated to the level that youth could be made aware of (Mr. H. January 2013).

In summary, the study found that there was no consensus in terms of ranking of the challenges in terms of greatest to least. The study found that on the part of the youth respondents they were more concerned with issues that affected their participation in decision making processes. On the other hand, the officials were more concerned with structural issues of incorporating the youth in decision making processes. The study also found that the youth lacked knowledge on rights issues as a result many thought politics is not for them but for adults. Finally the study observed that most of the policies developed have not been disseminated to the level that the youth can make use of them.

4.5. Institutional Support and Personal Effort

When asked what kind of institutional support they get from Parliament, most the youth respondents were grateful to the Malawi Parliament for establishing the youth parliament as per the following:

1) resolution of the International Parliamentary Union;
2) the practice among member states of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; and
3) the recommendations of the Malawi Parliament Strategic Plan 2010/15.

Many felt that the youth parliament would offer the youth a platform to give voice on matters affecting youth lives. Beyond the Malawi Parliament, it was noted that most of the youth respondents were aware that the Malawi Parliament was working in collaboration with the following government departments:

1) Ministry of Gender, Child Development and Community Development;
2) Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly;
3) Ministry of Youth Development and Sports;
4) Ministry of Education, Science and Technology;
5) Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; and
6) The National Youth Council of Malawi.

It was reported that most of the above institutions provide technical support on matters affecting the youth whilst the donor communities like UNICEF, Plan Malawi, Timveni Media were providing technical, financial and material resources (Mr. G, December, 2012). It was also reported that the Malawi Parliament was courting more stakeholders to support the operationalization of the youth parliament (Mr. G, December, 2012).

As regards to personal efforts to improve their participation in the youth parliament, most of the youth respondents indicated that they took personal initiatives. Such initiatives included: participation in other youth organizations at community level (e.g. Community Based Organizations and youth networks), lobbying friends in and outside the House, taking personal interest to understand the rights and responsibilities of the youth and strive to contribute in the House.

I am involved with a Community Based Organization that interacts with young people through it I have access to young people … (Mr. E, December 2012).

I do try to contribute in parliament but sometimes it doesn't work. Also I try to influence my colleagues so that if I can't voice out the views of young people outside at least someone would have raised the issues (Ms. A, December 2012).

What I try to do like on a motion that has been moved I try to contribute even though it is difficult to be recognized. I always try to stand to present the issues from my constituency and the general Malawi nation (Mr. C, Interview 2012).

The first thing is to understand what it takes to be a youth i.e. when I am a youth what are my responsibilities and then when you understand your responsibilities you will be able to understand your rights and even duties. Then within our communities people are there to understand our rights our responsibilities and our duties. I think we cannot afford to sit back and watch things getting bad and worse on our side but we will always be there to stand and talk (Ms. F, December 2012).

In summary, this section notes that the youth parliament gets technical, financial and material support from parliament and its cooperating. UNICEF highlighted the need to build capacity for youth parliamentarians on rights issues. Lack of awareness on policies by the youth parliamentarians was also highlighted. The study found that almost all the youth respondents indicated that they take some form of personal initiatives to improve their participation in the youth parliament.

4.6. Areas of Improvement

When asked as to which areas should be improved for the youth parliament to effectively function, most of the youth respondents mentioned the area of funding so that they could reach out to many youth in their constituencies. It was reported that most of the youth respondents would have liked to mobilize materials and resources for them to effectively reach out to many in their constituencies. Others advocated for increased mandates in order to effectively represent young people.

What I want so far are the limits to be improved. Again if they can give us some funds so that we … are able to reach the youth in the farthest areas… (Ms. F, December 2012).

One of the youth respondents advocated for an independent youth parliament with a functioning leadership.

> *I think the best way is …..to allow young people in leadership positions have information but I would have loved if these people were taken seriously and if they had their own offices so that they could make decisions on their own. At least the youth parliament would have been independent (Ms. D, December 2012).*

Another youth respondent indicated that it would have been better if parliament had considered giving youth parliamentarian's opportunities such as scholarships so that upon graduating as youth parliamentarians they could pursue further studies in order to become good and productive citizens.

> *. .. So if there can opportunities for youth parliamentarians to have scholarships or whatever they can be assisted with so that when there term expires they should say one time I was a youth parliamentarian and this is how I benefited (Mr. E, December 2012).*

Others suggested that upon graduating as youth parliamentarians, parliament should give them some form of recognition e.g. a certificate which would boast their curricula vita (Ms. F, December 2012).

To sum it up the study found that there was no consensus amongst the youth respondents on areas for possible improvement. The lack of consensus could be attributed to the following:

1) Inadequate orientation programme as it follows that many of the youth parliamentarians did not understand the objective of the youth parliament;
2) Personal ambitions; and
3) Competing agendas between youth and adults (Steering Committee).

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of this study. The finding were drawn from responses on individual interviews, questionnaire and document analysis. In terms of the concept of participation, most of the youth respondents agreed that they are conversant with the concept. Words like involvement, taking part and contributing on issues involving the youth in the youth parliament came out prominent among the youth respondents.

In summary, participation in the case of the youth in the Malawi Youth Parliament was regarded as a way of fulfilling personal goals, among them the ambition to become Members of Parliament. Others thought this was the best way they could get connected to the adult world and have access to opportunities in the form of certificates, scholarship and loans which they could use in their future world. On the part of parliament authorities, youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament was regarded as a means of taking parliament to the people as articulated under the Malawi Parliament Strategic Plan 2010/2015.

The study found that effective youth participation in decision making processes works well within the ambits of appropriate policy and legislative frameworks (Bessant, 2003). In Malawi, there seems to be confusion as regards to the issue of an enabling policy in that currently the national youth policy is under review. However indications are that the 1996 policy is still being used whilst in some instance people are using the revised policy which is not yet approved by cabinet. It was however reported that the 1996 national youth policy lacks on issues of youth participation in decision making processes. The study has found that those that prefer the revised policy do so as they believe it is in tandem with contemporary developments on youth participation in decision making processes. The study further found that due to the above confusion Malawi does not have a legislation advocating for youth participation in decision making processes. Finally, this study found that youth parliamentarians from urban areas had information on policies guiding youth participation in decision making processes unlike their counterparts from the rural areas.

Lack of funding towards youth parliamentarians' activities denied them the opportunity to interact with other youth. It resulted in early adjournments of meetings. Lack of funding also affected the activities of District Youth Officers who were supposed to facilitate the activities of youth parliamentarians. This study found that on its own the Malawi Parliament could not afford to fund the activities of the youth parliament. This is why the institution had to partner with other cooperating partners to sustain the programme.

The study found that lack of time to transact business in the youth parliament made life difficult amongst the youth members as they had to compete to catch the Speaker's eye to be given the floor to contribute. The study also found that parliamentary proceedings were being disrupted due to inadequate funding.

The study also found that though it was promised of the youth parliament that it would discuss its own agenda, this responsibility remained the sole responsibility of the adults through the

Steering Committee. The arrangement was such that the youth would only submit proposals to the Technical Committee which would in turn submit to the Steering committee.

It was argued that traditionally, Malawian youth have grown up in a cultural environment that does not tolerate openness between adults and youth and this has resulted in young people's confidence being eroded. As a result, adults perceive the youth as immature and ones not ready for decision making positions. The study has found that the establishment of the youth parliament has strained the relations at constituent level between Members of Parliament and youth parliamentarians. It was indicated that the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports together with other stakeholders is working towards changing the mindset of people by advocating for youth inclusion in decision making processes.

Age and language was linked to participants' ability to participate in decision making processes because younger parliamentarians had problems in keeping up with the debate in the House as proceedings were in English.

The study found that there was no consensus in terms of ranking of the challenges in terms of greatest to least. The study noted that on the part of the youth respondents they were more concerned with issues that affected their participation in decision making processes. On the other hand, the officials were more concerned with structural issues of incorporating the youth in decision making processes.

It was indicated that the youth parliament gets technical, financial and material support from parliament and its cooperating. UNICEF highlighted the need to build capacity for youth parliamentarians on rights issues. Lack of awareness on policies by the youth parliamentarians was also highlighted. The study found that almost all the youth respondents indicated that they take some form of personal initiatives to improve their participation in the youth parliament.

To sum it up the study found that there was no consensus amongst the youth respondents on areas for possible improvement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the research findings outlined in chapter four. The chapter is the essence of this study as it attempts to inquire into the meaning of data presented and provide answers to the research question. The analysis and interpretation is informed by the literature as reviewed in chapter two. The analysis and interpretation is guided by the purpose of this research which is to explore the challenges the youth in Malawi face when participating in parliamentary decision-making processes. Once the challenges are identified this chapter will make recommendations to strengthen the programme on youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament. This chapter will provide answers to the key question as appearing in the first chapter of the research. The primary question for the study was**:**

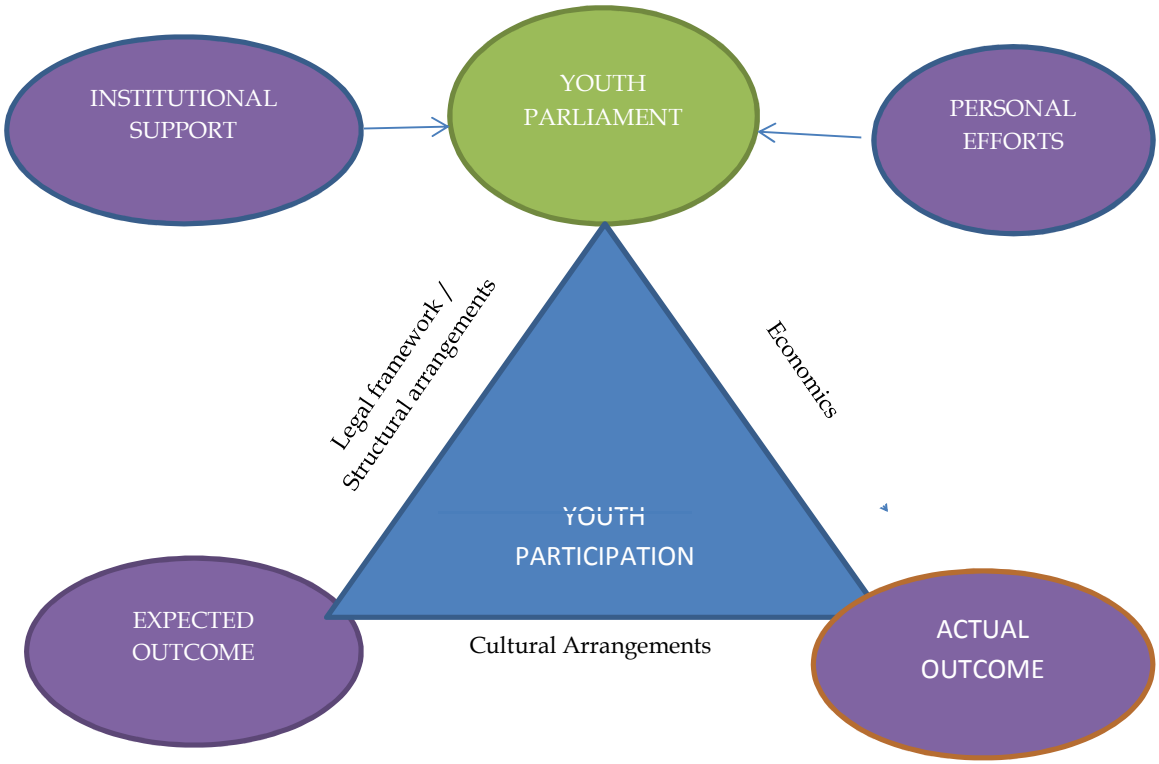
- What challenges do Malawian youth face when participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?

The secondary questions were:

- What were the underlying constraints that the youth in Malawi face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?
- Which of these challenges were more prevalent?
- How did the youth respond to these challenges? and
- What policy options were put in place to assist the youth to overcome the constraints?

In the analysis, the study will build on a conceptual model of a triangle with the following concepts occupying the endpoints of the triangle, youth parliament, expected outcome and real outcome. :

Figure 2.0. Model of Analysis for the Study



Source: Authors own

The area of the triangle is the unit of analysis in which we are going to locate our study. youth participation takes place within the unit of analysis. Themes like, legal framework, economic elements, structural arrangements and cultural aspects occupy the outer space of the triangle. Themes like institutional support and personal effort may be analyzed in terms of their contribution to the effectiveness of the youth parliament. The model above implies that youth participation in decision making processes may result either in expected outcomes or actual outcomes depending on the approaches taken to address the challenges identified.

5.2. Understanding Youth Participation in Parliamentary Decision Making Processes

For democracy to be effective it requires people affected by government decisions to be involved in decision making processes (Lee and Abbot, 2008). Youth participation in decision making processes entails offering young people opportunities to be involved in the social and democratic activities (Bessant, 2004). The youth as beneficiaries of those decisions are able to

influence the decision making processes. For the youth to effectively influence the decision making processes, they need to understand what participation is all about.

In this study, a question on whether the youth parliamentarians understood what participation was all about had an affirmative response. The finding of this research revealed that there was some level of youth participation in the parliamentary decision making processes. However, there was no consensus on youth *vis-a-vis* officials' perception on participation. Participation amongst the youth respondents included words like: involvement; taking part in community activities; and contributing on issues in the youth parliament. According to Sinclair (2004) participation is multi-dimensional and has been conceptualized differently by various scholars. In this regard, therefore one cannot blame the youth parliamentarians for defining participation differently. However, the anticipation was that in trying to define the concept of participation, the youth parliamentarians would try as much as possible to attach the concept of participation to the activities of parliament. It was anticipated that the definition of participation would be the same following the orientation programme which was conducted. The differences in their understanding of participation raised questions regarding the efficacy of the orientation programme which the youth parliamentarians were exposed to.

From the officials' point of view, participation was regarded as a strategy for achieving a strategic objective on the outreach programme of taking parliament to the people. This objective is articulated in the Malawi Parliament Strategic Plan from 2010-2015. According to Parliament officials the plan was to expose as many youth as possible to parliamentary business through practical experience (Mr. G, December 2012). However, the study found that authorities in parliament were not keen to embrace wholly the concept of youth participation in decision making processes. The evidence of this was that even after the Right Hon Speaker of Parliament had assured the youth parliament that it would have its own agenda; parliamentary authorities insisted that the Steering Committee would look into the agenda setting for the youth parliament. The finding of this study is consistent with Hart (1992) through his non participation model (see item 2.5.2). the first three rungs on Hart's Ladder represents children and young people being involved in adult initiated programmes in which it is assumed that adults are well positioned to conceive what is in the best interest of the child and the youth.

According to Middleton (2006) youth participation is a relatively new discourse that is embraced under the global youth rights campaign. It is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. Perhaps the whole idea by Parliament officials not including the issue on the orientation

programme was to deliberately hide information on youth citizenship rights whilst on the other hand they would want to be seen to be doing something in promoting youth participation.

5.2.1. Missing Strategy

The differences in opinion on youth participation in decision making processes between youth respondents and the officials implied a lack of a strategy guiding youth participation. This gap undermined the principle of effective participation. Without a strategy, monitoring and evaluation of whether participation was meaningful was affected. This, therefore, meant that the concept of participation was implicitly used by the participating parties for their own interest. For the youth respondents, participation in the youth parliament earned them praise, recognition and status such that their participation in the parliamentary decision making processes was based on those benefits. On the other hand, adult use of participation implied taking control over the youth and consolidating their power.

Checkoway and Gutiérrez (2006) argue that youth participation is about the real influence of young people in institutions and decisions and not about their passive presence as human beings. Meaningful participation may only happen when adults and youth start to look at each other as partners. Finlay (2010) argues that it is important that young people are empowered to have a voice[10] in the parliamentary decision making processes. The responsibility to provide for this empowerment should cascade from parliament authorities. When youth members were asked what parliament should do to promote their work, most youth respondents indicated that they wanted their mandates to improve to enable them to interact with youth outside the youth clubs. In addition to the mandates, funding for youth parliament activities as well as control over agenda setting were other areas of interest highlighted.

5.3. Themes

The Literature as reviewed in Chapter two of this report came up with the following themes:

- policy framework embracing youth participation;
- benefits of youth participation in decision-making processes; and
- challenges to youth participation in decision-making processes.

[10] Voice – speaking on issues that affect youth livelihood

Based on the data collected, a variety of categories and patterns emerged. Findings that emerged from the data collected have been categorized into the following themes. The themes are constructed to parallel the themes in the literature review. Additional themes that serve to address the identified challenges are added to the list of themes as appearing in the literature review.

- Benefits of Youth Participation in decision making processes;
- Challenges the youth face in participating in parliamentary decision making processes;
- Ranking of the challenges.
- institutional versus personal efforts; and
- areas for improvement.

5.3.1. Benefits of youth participation in decision making in decision making processes

A specific question on the type of benefits that the youth parliamentarians were enjoying in the processes of their participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament was never asked. However, this research found that youth parliamentarians receive allowances that are paid when a youth parliament is meeting. It was however observed that most of the youth respondents wanted Parliament to give them benefits like scholarships and loans. Considering that they were not on a formal employment, it was rather difficult to give them such benefits. Some of them wanted Parliament to give them these benefits as a reward for being good citizens. Perhaps, if parliament was to offer such incentives it would have generated greater interest among the youth.

5.3.2. Policy and Legal Framework Embracing Youth Participation

The revelation about the absence of a strategy that guides on youth participation resulted in a search to check whether the legal framework exists to provide for youth participation in decision making processes. The research found that in Malawi in as far as youth participation is concerned, there was no law that provided for youth participation. Against this background, youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament decision making processes is premised on international instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the African Youth Charter of 2006 (MNA, 2011). In addition the Commonwealth

Parliamentary Association elucidates the importance of youth involvement in decision making processes of their nations (MNA, 2011). Unfortunately, these instruments are not binding in the Malawian context as the law of the land requires that such instruments get domesticated for them to be enforced. In this regard, the Malawi Youth Parliament was established on the basis of international instruments and experiences. The interpretation of not adhering to policy and legal frameworks could be a danger of token adoption of international frameworks. This may occur in instances where national governments fail to fund the programmes as required of by the international standards. The danger in the case of Malawi is that whilst the international instruments may advocate for the allocation of adequate funding towards youth programmes, the national government is not obliged to follow what is prescribed by these international instruments as they are not binding. In this regard, a lot of youth parliamentarians may end up being dissatisfied with their involvement with the Malawi Youth Parliament. The dissatisfaction may come as a result of the following:

1) Lack of funding towards youth parliament activities limits their engagement with the youth from their constituents. Noting that this research was conducted only after five months of the youth parliament establishment, it was found that already there were feelings of resentment among some youth respondents as some of them thought they were not being taken seriously by the adults;
2) Lack of funding resulted in parliament failing to recruit adequate staff to coordinate the activities of the youth parliament leaving the whole task of coordinating 193 members of the youth parliament to one person;
3) This research found that the District Youth Officers who were supposed to mobilize the youth in the constituencies for the youth parliamentarians to consult before and after coming back from youth parliament meetings could not perform this task due to lack of funding. Similarly, the youth parliamentarians could not reach their fellow youth in the constituents in the hard to reach areas due to lack of transport money;
4) Failure by the youth parliament to constitute Parliamentary Committees may be another cause of concern as the youth parliament could not properly do its job of analyzing and researching;
5) It was reported that the youth parliamentarians were not getting any salary apart from allowances that were paid only when parliament was sitting. This being the first year of implementation some youth parliamentarians could be dissatisfied as they might have joined hoping that participation in the youth parliament would be highly rewarding; and

6) The absence of other opportunities like certificates, scholarships, and loans, which most of the youth parliamentarians thought they would access may be another cause of dissatisfaction and resentment.

Against the above background it can be argued that the future of the Malawi Youth Parliament would be unpopular resulting in a lot of youth withdrawing from participating in the activities of the youth parliament. The final result would be a youth parliament that does not meet its objectives (see item 1.1).

5.3.2.1. Policy illusion

In Malawi the absence of appropriate legislation may be attributed to the confusion surrounding the development of a national youth policy. The research found that a national youth policy which was supposed to incorporate youth participation issues was pending cabinet approval. The draft national youth policy's overall objective is to provide a framework that guides youth development and implementation of all youth programs that contribute to the improvement in the welfare of the youth in Malawi (MoYDS, 2010). The research found that failure to legislate on youth participation had resulted in disengagement on the part of the youth. When asked whether they experienced any challenge as youth parliamentarians, one youth respondent indicated that she has at times felt like giving up because young people are not appreciated (Ms. A, December 2012). Her assertion comes as a result of lack of an enabling environment supported by an appropriate law for youth participation. This research finding concurs with Zeldin and Petrokubi (2006) who argue against the notion of a youth driven approach (see item 2.2.1.) because it lacks supportive policies. They gave an example of the United States of America that signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 but however failed to ratify the Convention. This happens as it is not in the interest of the adults to share their power with the youth.

The study also found that the youth parliamentarians from urban areas were at least aware of what policies are, unlike those from the rural areas. Officials from the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports reported that their Ministry had distributed enough copies of the African Youth Charter to all the districts throughout the country (Mr. I, December 2012). It was however not known whether the copies reached the intended beneficiaries. For those in the rural areas the shortage of facilities like libraries and lack of a reading culture may have contributed to low absorption of policies.

Further proof of youth disengagement was observed when the youth respondents were asked whether they were recognized by their constituents. Most of them bemoaned the limited mandates given to them by parliament authorities. The authorities wanted to prohibit the youth from engaging in the activities that may be conceived as 'campaigning' by Members of Parliament. Such activities include holding of meetings or rallies with fellow young people to solicit their views on issues to be presented in parliament. The curfew on holding meetings and rallies was not sanctioned by any law. In this regard, the youth members were denied of their constitutional right as articulated under section 32 of the Malawi Constitution:

1) Every person shall have the right to freedom of association, which shall include the freedom to form associations.
2) No person may be compelled to belong to any association (*Malawi Const. chap. IV sect. 32. cl.1& 2)*.

It can therefore be argued that in the absence of an appropriate legal framework the abuse of power by the authorities was manifested through the issuance of a curfew by parliament authorities. The enactment a legal framework can therefore be seen as a necessary precondition for the operationalization of a youth parliament. It can therefore be argued that with an appropriate policy and legal framework, to guide the implementation, a youth parliament would more be more likely to attain the expected outcomes as opposed to what this study found.

Another initiative that may be taken to ease the situation is for Parliament to undergo a change process that may ensure that adults understand the role and mandates of youth parliament and how such a body will develop and strengthen democracy and add to the maturation of the political process. Adults need to be engaged on the notion that the youth parliament is meant to better equip the youth for their future life and is part of the human rights campaign as promulgated by international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 (Middleton, 2006; Rimmer, 2012).

5.3.2.2. Experiences from Other Jurisdictions

Literature reviewed shows that experiences from other jurisdictions matter when implementing youth programmes. The idea of benefiting from experiences of other countries takes us to another level of the discussions. Middleton (2006) argues that there has been a limited amount of research carried out in the field of youth participation to date. Findings from these

international studies may offer the space to learn from each other's experiences. Consequently it is necessary that further research be carried out to draw lessons on best practices.

The African Youth Charter demands its member states to put in place coherent national youth policies. Subsequently, member states are obliged to enact laws facilitating youth participation in decision making processes. Following the enactment of the national laws is the development of national youth programmes of action. As per the provision of the African Youth Charter, the national youth programme of action is supposed to be legally binding. Consequently, it demands that member states allocate adequate and sustained resources towards its implementation. This provision on its own is ambiguous as it doesn't specify how much is adequate, leaving room for countries to make their own decisions.

> *Such a programme of action shall be accompanied by adequate and sustained budgetary allocation (AYC, art. X11. sect. 1, cl. k).*

The study found that Malawi Parliament could not on its own fund the operations of the Malawi Youth Parliament, hence the more reason why it had to partner with the donor community (Mr. G., December 2012). Further the study found that UNICEF was committed to supporting the activities of youth parliament in as far as it continues to support child rights promotion in the country (Mr. H, January, 2012). In this regard, the Malawi Parliament was assured of continued donor support. Despite UNICEF assurances that it is committed to supporting the child rights promotion in the country questions may be raised on the part of seriousness by the Malawi Parliament in sustaining the programme in the long term.

5.3.3. Structural Challenges

Literature reviewed in chapter two has defined structural challenges as systemic barriers experienced in the course of representing other people. Youth participation in decision making processes may take the form of either representative or delegate status (McClelland, 1996). Representative status is where one is chosen by the people and has the right to claim representation of the people that elected him/her. A delegate is exactly the opposite of a representative (i.e. one not chosen and cannot claim representative status). This research found that the youth parliamentarians were selected by the bureaucrats and that this negatively affected their recognition at the levels of community and their follow youth.

In this study structural challenges that affected youth participation in parliamentary decision making processes include: history of Malawian youth in political participation; the selection procedure; allocation of youth members to either government or opposition; and agenda setting.

Historically, the youth in Malawi have been actively involved in political activities right from the days of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the first president of the Republic of Malawi. Their involvement differs greatly to the arrangement of the youth parliament. Right from the days of Dr. Banda, to the reign of Prof. Bingu Wa Mutharika the third president of Malawi; the youth were used as part of the paramilitary wings of political parties aimed at silencing political opponents (Phiri, 2000). For instance, Dr. Banda's Malawi Congress Party had the Malawi Young Pioneer; Dr. Bakili Muluzi's United Democratic Front had the Young Democrats, whilst Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika's Democratic People's Party had the Democratic People's Party Youth Cadets. The administration of these youth groups was based on the political ideologies of the parties. The atrocious activities these youth groups committed left many youth disengaged from political participation. The current programme on youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament is a digression from the above political thinking. It is a new way of doing things that seeks to politically empower the youth so that they become productive citizens. It is therefore necessary that appropriate strategies be put in place to sensitize both the youth and adults on the role and importance of the youth parliament.

When asked as to whether they were satisfied with the selection procedure most of the youth respondents gave an affirmative response as it proved how good they were in English over other candidates. The affirmative response was probably expected considering that these youth respondents were the ones who succeeded during the interviews. Unfortunately the research did not have the opportunity to engage those that did not succeed.

This research revealed that participation in the youth parliament was controlled by the bureaucrats. When asked how the youth parliamentarian got communication for the interviews there was confusion on how the selection process was administered in different places. Some of the youth respondents indicated that they were approached by the District Youth Officers to collect forms and thereafter they went for interviews. Others had to compete in an essay writing competition before taking part in the interviews. One youth respondent indicated that she was targeted by the District Youth Officers because previously she had been active in youth activities.

Another challenge with the selection procedure was the possibility for interviews to be manipulated. One youth respondent reported that some youth parliamentarians were young and sometimes they were shy and had nothing to say. He assumed that these youth members may have succeeded with the interviews because there were no other contestants to compete against (Mr. C, December 2012). Others suspected that the interviews might have been manipulated. This suspicion agrees with McMurray (2006) who argued that youth from rich backgrounds were most likely to be nominated to represent their peers. In a study that was done by Sorensen (2006) it was found that government controlled the selection processes of participants in order to minimize dissent. A similar situation may have occurred in the Malawian context considering that some of the youth parliamentarians chosen did not go through the interview process. Perhaps the official might have their own reasons for handpicking some of those youth candidates. This however may be interpreted as discriminating amongst many potential young people who would compete in such scenarios. In this regard, the selection process needs to be transparent as its appropriateness may help to bring candidates that are capable of working within the parliamentary framework. The danger of flouting the selection process is that it may yield candidates that are ill equipped. These people end up being frustrated with developments in the youth parliament and do not enjoy the challenge of being youth parliamentarians. Consequently, they end up withdrawing their participation.

The issue of allocating youth parliamentarians into either government or opposition sides for purposes of stimulating debate in the House compromised on the principles of party politics in parliament which are conflict and struggle as manifested during debate. It was noted that since the youth members were not coming from political parties they had no ideological basis of their arguments and therefore the debates were diluted. Perhaps this is the more reason why parliamentary officials considered the debate in the House as 'not comprehensive'. This research also found that the practice is different from experiences of other countries like the United Kingdom where elections are conducted every year to elect new youth parliamentarians.

Sorensen (2006) cited agenda setting by the bureaucrats as another form of control that government uses to control dissent. The finding of this study agrees with Sorensen (2006) in that agenda setting in the youth parliament was the core responsibility of the Steering Committee and that no youth parliamentarian sat on this Committee. This was despite the youth parliamentarians getting the assurances of the Rt. Hon Speaker of Parliament that the youth parliament would set its own agenda. However, Parliament authorities indicated that agenda setting was the sole responsibility of the Steering Committee (Mr. G, December 2012). The

arrangement was that the youth parliament would submit proposals to the Technical Committee for consideration, which would in turn submit the proposals for further consideration to the Steering Committee. This would entail youth parliamentarians' loss of control of the agenda. The absence of offices for the leadership of the youth parliament within parliament buildings made things worse as it meant they could not sit and plan on behalf of the youth parliament. When asked whether the Malawi Parliament intended to create offices for the youth parliament leadership, parliament officials did not have an answer to the question but only hoped that may be the issue could be considered in future (Mr. G, December 2012).

The issue of who sets the agenda for youth parliament has much bearing on the independence of the youth parliament. That the Steering Committee would continue to set the agenda for the youth parliament indicates a lack of independence on the part of the youth parliament. Ms. A (December, 2012) concurred with this thinking when asked whether the youth parliament is independent. This finding agrees with Sorensen (2006) who argues that the youth are employed to endorse what is already planned for by the adult designers of programmes. She further argued that government's manipulative tendencies left participants at roundtable fora disillusioned. Similarly, in this study some youth respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their involvement with the youth parliament. For instance one youth respondent reported that there have been a number of times that she felt like giving up because she feels young people are not appreciated Ms. A, December 2012). Issues like imposition of agenda and certainly adult control over the selection processes may end up forcing young people to disengage from the programme. The final consequences would be a youth parliament failing to realize its expected outcomes.

5.3.4. Economic Challenges

Literature reviewed suggests that the youth are disadvantaged due to their status in society as they are considered second class citizens. Finlay (2010) argues that the youth face challenges in accessing economic resources to fund their activities. The funding challenge was acknowledged by almost all the youth respondents. This study found that the lack of funding denied the youth parliamentarians the opportunity to interact with their constituents. The study further found that the operations of the youth parliament were jointly funded with the donor community, a thing that raises questions on the sustainability of the programme

As representatives of the youth, the youth parliamentarians were obliged to interact with young people in their constituencies. However, parliament authorities imposed a curfew that they can only interact with youth people in youth clubs. In spite of the curfew, the youth parliamentarians still could not afford to interact with young people in youth clubs as they needed transport money. The finding of this research agrees with Finlay's (2010) argument that youth participation cannot be meaningful in the absence of the necessary resources.

At the level of officials the challenge on resources particularly the lack of funding, affected the work of District Youth Officers. This study noted that ideally, District Youth Officers (DYO) were supposed to assist the youth parliamentarians in mobilizing young people for consultations. This study found that due to lack of funding the DYO's were unable to mobilize young people for the consultations. This finding agrees with Macleod (2009) who found that lack of economic resources affected the work of Non-Governmental Organizations that wanted to lobby parliament on behalf of the youth. Macleod's study also found that lack of economic resources slowed down the work of parliamentary committees in that they could not meet as planned. According to the Terms of Reference for the establishment of youth parliament, the latter is mandated to establish relevant committees of the House (National Assembly, 2011). However, due to a lack of funding, the establishment of a relevant House Committees was not possible.

Another area that suffered due to lack of funding was the duration of meetings. It was noted that the Malawi Youth Parliament adopted a tradition similar to that of many countries in the Commonwealth (MNA, 2011). That is, youth parliament meetings are scheduled for three days, preceded by a two day orientation programme with the meetings taking place twice a year. In 2012, the youth parliament held two meetings. During the second meeting it was noted that this Commonwealth tradition was breached. For instance, for a meeting that was planned for five days in December, 2012 it only lasted for two days i.e. from 10th to 11th December 2012. This early adjournment was linked to inadequate funding. The lack of funding was confirmed by parliament authorities, who indicated that under parliament's budget for the financial year 2012/13, resources were not allocated for the youth parliament. It was reported that parliament was squeezing itself by allowing the youth parliament meet (Mr. G, December, 2012). The constraint on time was also be blamed for contributing to debate not being comprehensive. As noted above the youth parliament planned to meet for a five day meeting twice every year with each meeting preceded by a two day orientation (Malawi National Assembly, 2011). The orientation is expected to sharpen parliamentary language skills for youth parliamentarians. This argument is supported by Sacks and Thiel (1995) who by using the example of freshmen in a

university context argued that in almost every area of university life diversity training continues throughout the entire college life. This research found that only during the first meeting was the orientation programme implemented. During the second meeting orientation was completely omitted from the programme. This study did not attempt to find out why the orientation was not included on the programme of the second meeting. In this regard, the research can only speculate that the omission could be deliberate or it was a result of inadequate funding. However, the speculation on inadequate funding might be appealing as this study found that parliament was squeezing itself by convening the youth parliament meetings.

Finally, this study found that there is only one member of staff coordinating the activities of 193 youth parliamentarians in the Malawi National Assembly. Though no linkage was made to the issue of funding, this study concludes that the situation was a result of lack of funding as youth parliament activities were not budgeted for in the financial year 2012/13. Going by Finlay's (2010) argument that youth participation cannot be meaningful in the absence of the necessary resources, this study agrees that the realization of expected outcomes of the youth parliament depends on the availability of resources.

5.3.5. Cultural Challenges

Questions on power imbalance between the youth parliament and the main parliament were not of particular focus of this study. However it became clear during the interviews that certain elements of power imbalance kept reappearing. For instance, most of the youth respondents indicated that their Members of Parliament were unwilling to meet them. All this was happening after Parliament had informed the Members of Parliament on the establishment of the Malawi Youth Parliament. It was also reported that during the August meeting one of the Members of Parliament faulted the selection of youth parliamentarians. The key reason why this Hon. Member opposed to the selection procedure is that he looked the youth parliamentarians as rivals. His argument was that parliament is a political institution and that there could not be such a thing like a youth parliament without involving political parties. Such resistance coming from an Hon. Member of Parliament revealed a challenge associated with selecting people into particular positions. This finding of the research differs on the way the selection process is administered in other jurisdictions where youth parliamentarians are elected. A good example of such countries is the United Kingdom. McClelland, (2006) argues that the practice of electing members into positions gives them representative status. Perhaps this is the more reason why

the Members of Parliament did not recognize the youth parliament as they themselves were duly elected to represent the people..

McMurray (2006) argues that Youth participation in community activities is controlled by adults (McMurray, 2006). Proponents of social capital theory believe adult control over the youth emanates from their control of the potential resources that society or networks have and how the same can benefit young people (Bourdieu, 2008; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). From this analysis it can be concluded that it is difficult to balance the power between the youth and adults as it is very likely that adults will exert greater control over the youth due to their alignment with potential resources that society or networks have.

When the officials were asked to comment more on the issue of adult control over youth, they indicated that in Malawi it is believed that children are there to be served and provided for and this begins at family level (Mr. I, December 2012). This perception is institutionalized to the extent that organizations fail to accommodate young people in decision making processes as young people are considered young, immature and inexperienced. Hogeveen (2006) argues that adults see the youth as not intelligent and mature as adults themselves and therefore unfit in decision making structures. He further argued that adults established youth forums largely because they are perceived to provide tangible opportunities for ongoing participation. Similarly, from the findings of this study it can be argued that the establishment of a youth parliament in Malawi did not arise out of the demands of the youth themselves but rather from Parliament's desire to be in line with international practice e.g. the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Much as the youth would strive to effectively participate in decision making processes, everything else depends on adult perception of the youth. Where adults value the youth as partners in decision making processes, the expectation is that youth programmes would achieve the expected outcomes. In instances where adults snub the youth from participating in decision making processes, youth programmes end up attaining actual outcomes which are far from the projected outcomes.

5.4. Institutional Support versus Personal Effort

Since the youth parliamentarians were restricted from mobilizing resources for their activities, it was not surprising that none of the youth respondents had approached organizations outside parliament for assistance to improve their participation in the youth parliament. Almost all the youth respondents indicated that they preferred personal efforts over institutional support. Such efforts include: participation in community based organizations; striving to contribute on issues on the floor; and lobbying other youth members on particular matters. The consequences of this dependence on personal effort over institutional support are that the study was unable to give any idea of the effectiveness of institutional support that may come from the donor community. The dependence on personal efforts may be due to a dearth of knowledge on policy and legal framework embracing youth participation in decision making processes. This could be the reason why no member of the youth parliament challenged the illegal curfew on stopping them from mobilizing resources. It can be argued that the reason why the youth did not challenge the ban is because of their upbringing. Traditionally Malawian youth just like African youth are brought up in a culture where it is discouraged to argue with adults.

The youth reliance on personal efforts was based on their attachment to community groups as well as the trust which they had on their colleagues. It would be another form of withdrawal from community engagement and repositioning themselves from adult influence. The only danger with continued reliance on personal efforts is situations where the youth develop resentment to the level that they cannot cooperate with the adults.

5.5. Areas for Improvement

A question as to which area should be improved for the youth parliament to effectively deliver its services drew mixed feelings amongst youth respondents. The following were the responses:

1) increased funding;
2) improved mandates;
3) an independent parliament; and
4) finally the youth parliament to give them scholarship, loans and some form of recognition like certificates.

Critically looking at the findings of this study on this question one would argue that the implementation of the youth parliament is a missed opportunity in the sense that none of the responses above agrees with the objectives for the establishment of the Malawi Youth Parliament which were as follows:

(1) Main objective

to give the youth a platform on which they can give voice to issues that affect their lives and for government and other stakeholders to consider and take appropriate action.

(2) Specific objectives:

- to provide an opportunity to the youth to give voice to issues affecting their lives socially, politically and economically;
- to give the youth an opportunity to actively participate in the policy formulation and legislative process in Malawi;
- to orient Malawian youth to the political, democratic and legislative processes of the country; to provide an opportunity to further their public speaking and leadership skills; and
- to enhance the representation of Malawian youths at various fora, locally, regionally and internationally (MNA, 2011).

This study found that the orientation programme for the Malawi Youth Parliament did not adequately equip the youth parliamentarians with the objectives of the youth parliament. It is therefore not surprising to find youth parliamentarians thinking contrary to the objectives of the institution.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has provided the analysis on the data and findings highlighted in chapter four. Six themes were identified and have been adequately articulated. The analysis has established the following:

1) Youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament decision making processes is good to both youth and adults. It is good to the youth as it promotes youth citizenship rights thereby enhancing democratic values. On the other hand, it demonstrates adult willingness to engage the youth in decision making processes.

2) The analysis has noted that youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament is affected by several barriers which have been categorized as follows: legal; economic; structural; cultural; and demographic. The analysis has argued that if the challenges are properly addressed youth participation may achieve the intended outcomes. On the other hand, if the challenges are not addressed participation may achieve real outcomes.

In order to deal with the challenges identified it was noted that parliament was closely collaborating with stakeholders like government ministries and departments as well as the donor community. The stakeholders provide technical, financial and material support.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The section concludes the study by relating the purpose of the study to the research findings. It then gives recommendations for the improvement of youth participation in the Malawi Youth Parliament. This chapter is structured as follows:

6.1.1. Conclusions

Chapter one of this report deals with the objective of this study. The introduction notes that Malawian youth face challenges when participating in decision making processes. This is despite the country being a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and other international instruments. The background to the study is that the youth (i.e. those aged 10 to 29 years) constitute 40 percent of the population. This grouping of people that constitutes a greater part of the population continue to face various challenges such as HIV and AIDS, high unemployment , high illiteracy rates and alcohol and drug abuse. The study is inspired by the statement of the problem that the youth in Malawi face challenges when participating in decision making processes. The Chapter notes that research carried out in other parts of the world shows that the youth continue to face challenges when participating in decision making processes. This research therefore aimed at exploring the challenges the Malawian youth face when participating in parliamentary decision making processes. The research question for the study was on what challenges do Malawian youth face when participating in decision making processes. The area of focus for the study was the Malawi Youth Parliament.

Chapter two of this report looked at the various literatures available on youth participation in decision making processes. Emphasis was placed on international as well as regional experiences. The literatures provided the scope in which this research was placed. The literatures also helped to set the parameters from which the research question was formulated.

The chapter attempted to define some of the key definitions around the discourse of youth participation in decision making processes. It then went on to highlight four theories that have

been used to analyze the findings of this research as presented in chapters four and five. The theories that were identified included: youth and adult driven, social capital and governance theories.

Each of the above theories was discussed in detail with the idea of acknowledging how it impacts on youth participation in decision making processes. The theories were discussed of course with their key authors.

Chapter two came up with three themes namely:

1) Policy framework embracing youth participation;
2) Benefits of youth participation in decision making processes; and
3) Challenges to youth participation in decision making processes.

Finally, the Chapter came up with the analytical framework that was used to draw comparisons with findings from the Malawian Youth Parliament.

Chapter three of the report dealt with the methodology. This study adopted a qualitative approach. According to Leedy and Ormrod (1985) the qualitative approach collects numerous forms of data and critically analyzes them to construct meaning out of the complex situation.

In terms of research design the study was non experimental case study. The study was non experimental as there was no test and control groups. This design allowed the researcher to obtain detailed perceptions on the challenges the youth face when participating in decision making processes.

In this study, the researcher collected data using the following research methods: interviews, a questionnaire in the case of a failed interview with an Official from UNICEF, observation and document analysis. These methods were used as complementary; however interviews were the key method applied. The interview schedule was used to obtain firsthand information through face to face interviews with respondents. Interview interaction provided the opportunity to further probe on the challenges the youth face when participating in decision making processes. As already highlighted document analysis, observation and the questionnaire were used to complement on what the interviews could not provide.

In terms of sampling, the research had a total of nine participants. Six of these were members of the youth parliament (two boys and four girls). The rest of three were an official from Malawi Parliament, an official from UNICEF and an official from the Ministry of Youth Development and

Sports. The youth respondents were involved in the study because they were a target population whilst the officials were involved as they are directly involved with the operations of the Malawi Youth Parliament.

The chapter also dealt with issues of validity and reliability. The study noted that the research's intent is to have a reliable and a valid research. In order to attain validity and reliability the study used both primary and secondary data. Triangulations of data as well as member checks were other strategies used in this study.

Data analysis was done in terms of coding data into themes. The following themes were discussed in chapter five:

1) Benefits of youth participation in decision making processes;
2) Challenges the youth face when participating in parliamentary decision making processes;
3) Ranking of the challenges
4) Institutional support versus personal efforts.; and
5) Area for improvement.

Chapter four presented data collected from individual interviews with key informants, document analysis and questionnaire. Interviews with key informants provided key primary data.

The chapter began by giving a synopsis of the respondents. As noted under chapter three the study involved nine participants. In this chapter, these participants are given pseudonyms ranking from Mr. /Ms. A to I. The whole idea of using pseudonyms was for purposes of confidentiality and anonymity.

In presenting the benefits of youth participation in decision making processes, the chapter reported that the study had no particular question on benefits however the issues on benefit kept coming up when youth respondents were responding on the question of their understanding of participation. Issues like scholarships and loans were mentioned as part of the potential benefits which the youth would like to benefit from the Malawi Youth Parliament.

This chapter looked at the challenges facing the Youth when participating in the parliamentary decision making processes. The challenges were looked at in terms of the following subtopics:

1) policy frameworks;
2) Lack of funding;
3) Insufficient time;
4) Agenda setting;
5) Power imbalance between youth and adults;
6) Youth inability to communicate effectively;
7) Lack of recognition at the community and youth level

The chapter also looked at the possibility of the ranking the challenges in terms of greatest to least. The study noted that there was no consensus on this aspect.

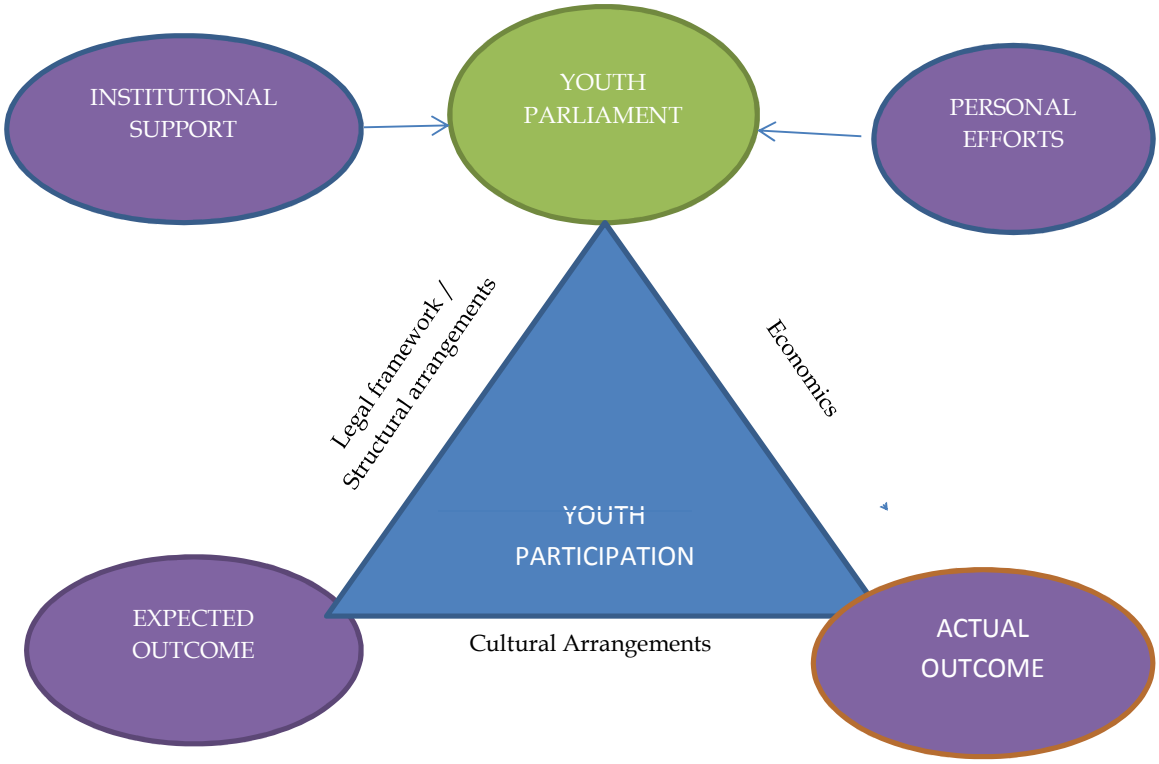
In term of strategies to overcome the challenges, the study found that most of the youth respondents reported that they prefer to use personal efforts over institutional support. The chapter noted that parliament as an institution was getting financial, technical and material support from the donor community.

At the individual level the chapter indicated that most of the youth respondents reported that the curfew that stops them from mobilizing resources forced them to rely on personal efforts in order to jack up their participation in the youth parliament.

Finally, the chapter considered which areas needed improvement. Different views were expressed on this one with some members of the youth parliament opting for financial and other opting for increased mandate.

Chapter five of the report analyzes the finding's outlined in chapter four. The analysis and interpretation was informed by the literature as reviewed in chapter two and was guided by the purpose of the research which was to explore the challenges the youth face when participating in decision making processes. In the analysis, the research developed this model.

Figure 2.0. Model of Analysis for the Study



Source: Authors own

The model above shows that youth participation in decision making processes may culminate in either expected or actual outcomes depending on the factors at play. These factors as represented in this model are: cultural, legal economic and structural challenges that the youth face when participating in decision making processes. Other factors that are considered are institutional support as well as personal efforts. The latter two may have an effect on the type of outcomes the youth parliament may attain. The chapter has argued that the problems associated with the above listed challenges may result in the youth parliament not achieving its expected outcomes. The chapter has argued that the youth parliament can only realize expected outcomes if the challenges the youth face in participation are addressed.

Chapter six summarizes the conclusions of all the other five chapters of the report. It begins with synopsis of the first five chapters. It then ends with a section on the recommendation as well as a section on the areas for improvement:

6.2. Recommendations

In chapter one, this report highlights the purpose of this research as to explore the challenges the youth in Malawi face in participating in youth parliament decision-making processes. The research question for the study was what challenges do Malawian youth face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes? In chapter four, through data collected the report highlights the challenges that Malawian youth face when participating in parliamentary decision making processes. The challenges include: absence of an appropriate policy and legal framework; funding; adult attitudes; perception of adults towards youth; power imbalance between adults and youth and many more. The challenges have been grouped into economic, structural, legal and cultural factors. Apart from identifying these challenges the study has highlighted some of the measures adopted to prevent the challenges. These measures are institutional support versus personal efforts. The study will at this stage attempt to recommend on best ways of addressing the challenges. This research therefore makes recommendations at two levels as follows:

6.2.1 at the level of Malawi Parliament

1) Malawi needs to improve on its policy and legislative framework if it to succeed in matters of youth participation in decision making processes. Such a framework should be informed by the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi;
2) Separate rules that guides practice and procedure needs to be developed for the youth parliament;
3) The main Parliament needs change management process if it is to recognize the youth parliament. The following could be some of the strategies to be adopted:
    - Conducting a workshop with the main parliament in order for Members of Parliament to understand the role of youth parliament;
    - Sensitization workshops with the main parliament on youth rights issues
4) For the sustainability of the Malawi Youth Parliament, the Malawi Parliament should incorporate in its budget the activities of the youth parliament; and
5) In order to enrich debate in the House, the authorities should see to that that only those candidates that can ably participate are selected. In this regard, Parliament may wish to raise the minimum level of qualification to secondary school students. Primary pupils may be allowed to observe youth parliament proceedings with the idea that it would in the long term motivate them to participate in youth parliament activities.

6.2.2. at the level of youth parliament

1) Youth parliamentarians need rigorous training programmes if they are to articulate youth issues from their constituencies. Youth rights issues could form part of the training programmes. The period for orientation could be used for these training programmes;
2) Workshops on rights issues should not only involve youth parliamentarians but the entire the wider youth community; and
3) Youth need to take interest in reading and understanding policies and other legal instruments relating to youth parliament.

6.3 Areas for more research

First, there should be continued research on the importance of youth participation in decision making processes if government is to take the notion seriously.

Second, a study on the best practices for the implementation of the youth parliament.

Third, this research has argued that the youth in Malawi constitute a larger part of the population. It would therefore be of interest to look at the effect of increased space for youth participation in decision making processes on the economic performance of the country.

Finally, further research can be undertaken to assess the effect of increasing the space for youth participation *vis*-a-*vis* budgetary allocations.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Organization	Date of Interviews	Constituency/Post
Malawi Youth Parliament	11/12/12	Nkhata bay North West
Malawi Youth Parliament	11/12/12	Karonga North West
Malawi Youth Parliament	11/12/12	Lilongwe Nkhoma Mpenu
Malawi Youth Parliament	12/12/12	Lilongwe Central
Malawi Youth Parliament	11/12/12	Balaka Central
Malawi Youth Parliament	12/12/12	Phalombe North
Malawi Youth Parliament	14/12/12	Youth Coordinator
UNICEF	21/01/13	Youth Coordinator
Ministry of Youth Development and Sports	17/12/12	Chief Youth Officer

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges the youth in Malawi are facing in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes.

Research questions

The Primary Question is: what challenges do Malawian youth face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?

The secondary questions are:

i. What are the underlying constraints that the youth in Malawi face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?

ii. Which of these challenges are more prevalent? and

iii. What policy options has the Malawi Youth Parliament put in place to assist the youth to overcome the constraints?

Interview Process

Introduction

Introduction includes explaining purpose of the research and filling in of any incomplete general information in questionnaire.

1. Fill in any gaps from questionnaire and probe on the motivation to participate as young parliamentarian. Use this as ice-breaker.
2. Request for permission to record, if applicable, and explain that the recordings can be deleted, if that is desire of interviewee. Further explain that for purposes of anonymity a pseudonym will be used.

GENERAL INFORMATION OF RESPONDENT

1. Sex (tick applicable)	Male		Female		
2. Age Group (tick applicable)	Below 15yrs	15 -19 yrs	20 -24 yrs	25– 29 yrs	Above 30 yrs
3. Level of participation	Always	Sometimes	Never		
4. Constituency Name					
5. Name of Party/Independent					

Participatory Related Challenges

6.0 Have you ever experienced any challenges whilst participating as a young parliamentarian?

If no why do you think so?

If the answer is yes ask the following*:*

6.1 What are these challenges?

7.0 How would you rate the challenges i.e. which one do you consider to be a major challenge?

Institutional Support

8.0 How has the Malawi Parliament assisted in addressing these challenges?

9.0 How has your Party assisted you in tackling the challenges?

10.0 Apart from the Malawi Parliament, which other institutions does assist the youth in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?

11.0 Have you ever approached any other institution for any other assistance on participation in parliamentary decision-making processes?

Individual initiatives

12.0 On an individual level, what initiatives have you taken to enhance participation in parliamentary decision-making processes?

Probe if the problems are persisting.

Policy interventions

13.0 Are you aware of any policy instruments that are there to promote youth participation in parliamentary decision-making processes?

If yes. probe on whether they believe the policies are assisting in bridging the gap between adult and youth participation in decision-making processes.

14.0 In conclusion, do you have any other comments you would want to make with regard to challenges facing the youth in participating in youth parliament decision-making processes.

Appendix 3

Questionnaire to Youth Coordinators

1) What are the challenges that Malawian youth face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?

2) Which of these challenges do you consider to be a major challenge?

3) What institutional support (Parliament/UNICEF) does the Malawi Parliament provide to the Malawi Youth Parliament with regard to dealing with the challenges that the youth are facing?

4) What policy options are available for the Malawi Youth Parliament to effectively carry out its mandate?

5) How much of these policies are the youth aware of them?

6) On a personal level how much of institutional support do you get from Parliament/ UNICEF to assist with your work to enhance youth participation in parliamentary decision-making processes?

7) Are you aware of other institutions that are interested in supporting the programme of work for youth participation in parliamentary decision-making processes?

    a. **If yes, probe on what has happened so far.**

8) What else can be done to address the challenges that the youth in Malawi are facing to participate in parliamentary decision-making processes?

Appendix 4

Questionnaire to UNICEF Coordinator

1) What is the main objective of the youth parliament?
2) Is UNICEF still supporting the child parliament?
3) How different is the child parliament from the youth parliament?
4) What are the challenges that Malawian youth face in participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?
5) Which of these challenges do you consider to be a major challenge?

   Why?
6) What else can be done to address the challenges that the youth face when participating in parliamentary decision-making processes?
7) Who sets the agenda for youth parliament?
8) What institutional support does UNICEF provide to the Malawi Youth Parliament?
9) How long will UNICEF continue to support youth parliament?
10) What policy options are available for the Malawi Youth Parliament to effectively carry out its objectives?
11) How much of these policies are the youth aware of them?
12) Are you satisfied with the selection procedure that was used to identify youth parliamentarians?