

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The focus of this study has gone through some changes. The initial title was ‘The Cultural Dimensions of Development Administration in Africa’. This was found to be too broad focussing on the whole of Africa. Further, the title ‘The Cultural Dimensions of Development Administration in Africa’ became difficult to study, as it required visiting a selection of countries for the purpose of gathering data. This need for extensive travel in Africa made this task become insurmountable. This posed the risk of dealing with the topic only superficially. Realising that the field of culture, not to mention development, is very wide and in view of the limitations of the study as an academic exercise such as limited time and financial resources the title was changed to ‘Cultural Dimensions of Development Administration in Malawi’. Even then this title was found still to be relatively broad. It was discovered that dealing with culture in this sense meant to analyse all development sectors because culture permeates all fields of existence. The study then focussed on the rural development role of traditional authorities in view of the decentralisation process that was taking place in Malawi. This title became more manageable in view of the scope of the study, which required delimiting the study and in-depth discussion of the issues on a specific area, hence the focus on Traditional Authority Malili, in the Central Region of Malawi.

It emerged in the course of reading that there are two main viewpoints, one arguing for the recognition of Chiefs as an important tool for rural development, the other seeing them as agents for regression as opposed to progression. There is generally a consensus among a considerable number

of writers that, as the main custodians of culture, traditional authorities in Africa should be brought to play a greater role in actual rural development administration and project management (Ray 1996a:33 & Ray and van Rouveroy van Neuwal 1996b:19; Nkosi, Kirsten, Bhembe, Sartorius von Bach 1994: 282; Holomisa 1999:43; Bekker 1993:3). In the same vein, there are as well a considerable number of commentators who are strongly convinced that traditional authorities have no place in modern Africa because they retard rather than encourage development (Van der Waal 1994: 434). According to Muva (2002). Chiefs are only necessary as “ceremonial symbols of the past” and are not important for development because when people are economically empowered they eventually develop a new set of values which chieftaincy tend to suffocate in order to maintain the status quo. Muva further argues that people these days no longer respect the authority of Chiefs because that authority is stifling and egocentric and there are other structures that have taken over Chiefs’ functions such as members of parliament, councillors, government, the executive, legislature and judiciary. She concluded that there should not be dependence on Chiefs to lead in community development work (Muva 2002). This study strives to dispute this line of argument.

Given the strong arguments that both sides give, it is not easy to take sides. However, the student has to take a position regardless of the complexity of the issue. The argument that chiefs must be viewed as an important tool for development is more convincing in the sense that when traditional authority is mobilised under the right conditions extensive projects become possible as it, in turn, mobilises people at grassroots. In the same vein, in the present situation, when traditional authority breaks down, violence may erupt, disrupting people’s lives and certainly any chances of development for some time in the area (Ray, 1996b:33; Malan 1993:205).

The opposing view is rather uncompromising and not in tandem with the new thinking of participatory development management. Excluding a section of the society that hitherto has been responsible for the peace and cohesion of the grassroots rural communities is against the principles of democracy and human rights (Schmidt 1998:41). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and binds all nations who are members of the world body states in Article 27 (1) that “Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community.....”.

These two opposing view-points can only be resolved by looking at the situation on the ground to determine for oneself the argument that is proven in a particular situation. For such a topic, with diverse strong arguments for and against, the results of a single study carried out in a particular country cannot represent the whole of Africa.

Although the prevalence of Traditional Authorities in most, if not all, African countries cannot be disputed, it is true Africa has diverse traditional styles of administration, which form part of its culture. The results of this study and the recommendations made therein, therefore, can only apply specifically to Malawi.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

The decision to carry out this study was hastened when the search for similar specific studies that was carried out on Malawi yielded little. One of the contributing factors may be that at the time of research the history of local government and decentralisation in Malawi was fairly recent and had

not yet kindled the interest of scholars.

Based on the premise that involvement of Chiefs is an essential aspect of project management in Malawi, an examination of the available literature on Malawi on this aspect revealed a passive attitude among commentators to bring into clear perspective the role that traditional authorities can play in rural development and administration. They instead tended to portray a generalised view that local cultural issues negatively affect development efforts (Bekker 1993:200; Muva 2002; Isamah 1991:31). The initial motivation therefore, was to bring clarity to the role of traditional authorities in community development.

It was the second motivation for this study to argue that programs and projects must take into account a number of cultural factors as prerequisites. This can be done more effectively with the involvement of Chiefs who are arguably the custodians of the local culture (Nkosi et al 1994:286). If Chiefs are the custodians of the culture their involvement is ultimately the involvement of the culture, which determines the behaviour of members of the community. In the Malawi context and indeed the rest of Africa, rural communities rally around their chiefs (Nkosi et al 1994:283), so that their effective integration into the development process can have positive impact on continuity and change. As Trotha argues this fits in with the argument that any changes stimulated from outside must fit in with the society's ways of working and with its desire for change (in Ray 1996:10).

The study was, therefore, expected to satisfy two important needs. Firstly the study would fill the gap in the existing literature on Malawi as regards the development role of Chiefs. It would examine the decentralisation process and the position of Chiefs in the administration of community

development projects in rural Malawi. It further would draw out evidence to support the conviction that traditional authorities are an essential aspect of rural development by examining the success and failure of Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) projects vis-à-vis participation of traditional authorities. MASAF has been deemed one of the model social funds in Southern Africa, which has attracted experts from other countries like Kenya and Zambia to understudy it (The Nation 2003; Television Malawi 2003).

Secondly the study would recommend strategies, based on the participatory development and cultural approaches, for interventions by external development partners wanting to implement community projects in grassroots rural Malawi. The often-prescribed solutions by the development partners to local problems have not made the intended impact in uplifting the lives of rural Malawians (UNESCO 1982:2; UNESCO 2000:5; Clover 2003:19; Kalyalya, Mhlanga, Seidman, Sembonja 1988:134). This calls for new strategies that can bring maximum results, strategies that the affected people themselves can propose through participatory approaches.

Both the Government of Malawi and private and international development partners can utilise the results of the study to improve on their strategies and approaches when dealing with rural development issues in Malawi.

1.3 Assumptions of the Study

Focussing on Traditional Authorities/Chiefs as a cultural phenomenon, the first assumption of the study was that the use of Chiefs is an essential aspect of project management for any development effort to yield better results in Malawi than has hitherto been the case (UNESCO 2000:52).

The second assumption was that the use of triangulation with the sample survey method of data collection combining a literature review of research works, interviews, case study and participatory learning and group discussion would adequately reveal the role of traditional authorities in rural development. A sample of literature and respondents was made selecting what was relevant to the topic both in support of and against the importance of traditional authorities in rural development as well as in the theoretical aspects of development and development administration, decentralisation, participatory development and culture. The detailed discussion on the methodology is dealt with in section 1.8 below.

1.4 Research Objectives

After ascertaining the assumptions of study objectives were to be clarified before any further step could be taken. The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Discuss the linkages between development participation and culture; culture and chiefs as factors of development; importance of decentralisation in inclusive decision making; the role of social funds in community participation and; report on the perceptions of people on the development role of traditional authorities as recorded in the field research.
- ii. Identify the critical rural development role of Malawi's Traditional Authorities;
- iii. Propose how development managers can utilise the decentralised public administration system to improve on the relevance of their interventions to the local communities by improving the involvement of chiefs in development projects.

1.5 Statement of Research Problem

The main problem of this research was to determine the role of traditional authorities (TA)/Chiefs in rural development within the decentralisation system in Malawi.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

Based on the problem identified above, the study was conducted mainly in Traditional Authority Malili in the Central Region of Malawi. This was done deliberately as it was felt that it was people in the villages who should say whether traditional authorities were relevant for their own development not as opposed to towns people because the institution of Traditional Authority in Malawi is more relevant in the rural areas than the cities. However, some selected people, namely officials of department of local government, decentralisation secretariat and MASAF were also interviewed to get a sample of not only the towns people's thinking but also government's thinking.

The study makes an examination of the structures and processes of MASAF and decentralisation system to determine how useful traditional authorities have been and will be in their operations. It does not analyse the causes of success and failure of these institutions' community development projects and programmes in the broadest sense but as far as these can be attributed to traditional authorities.

The study also suggests ways of utilizing the traditional authority system in Malawi to ensure implementation of rural development projects with sustainable results.

However, the study does not purport to cast the findings and suggestions in iron, as there is always room for improvement.

It further does not attempt to make an in-depth comparison of development efforts, which marginalize traditional authorities, and those that do not as that warrants a whole study focusing on this specific area.

1.7 Background to selection of suitable methodology

The first question that every researcher grapples with after identifying the problem is what methodology to use in the research. This question is not as easy to answer as it sounds. Confusion sometimes reigns on the distinction between methodologies or approaches (and their categories), methods or instruments, techniques and tools.

However, for this study a number of authors were consulted who clarified the distinctions and this helped in making the decision on what methodology is suitable to provide answers to the problem.

Leedy (1993:121) describes methodology as “merely an operational framework within which the facts are placed so that their meaning may be seen more clearly” Whereas Leedy (1993:13) distinguishes two categories of methodology: qualitative and quantitative, Mouton (1996:35-38) adds a third dimension: participatory methodology. Leedy (1993:13) further identifies four types of methodologies in his two categories: historical method (qualitative); analytical survey method (quantitative). Other writers propose other categories such as “action research” and “case and field study research”. Norton, Bird, Brock, Kakande and Turk (2001:6) identify Participatory Rapid Assessment (PRA) and Participatory Learning and

Action (PLA) as examples of participatory methodology and action research.

Mouton (1996:38), Du Plooy (1995: 28, 2001), Neuman (2000:66) and Leedy (1993:143) agree on a number of issues. They agree that qualitative and participatory researches are usually used for verbal data while quantitative research is associated with numerical data. Qualitative and Participatory research are in great part concerned with sociological human beings: interpersonal relationships, personal values, meanings, beliefs thoughts and feelings while quantitative research is concerned with impersonal experiments (Mason 2002:2). They also agree that a hybrid variation exists designed as triangulation, or more specifically methodological triangulation, which combines two or more methods of data collection procedures within a single study.

This brings us to the issue of the instruments, techniques and tools of data collection. The instruments are the actual ways of extracting information or data from the respondents such as group discussions and interviews (structured and non structured). Techniques are the style with which the instruments are used such as applying the instruments to a sample. The tools of research are the things that are used to assist in the extraction of the information such as questionnaires, computer and the library.

Therefore, after looking at the above arguments and the requirements of the research problem the decision was made to use the qualitative methodology of descriptive survey combined with participatory methodology of PRA and case study.

This entailed a combination of instruments: literature review, group

discussions, questionnaires, and structured and non-structured interviews where both primary and secondary sources were selected through purposive sampling. Three instruments; structured one to one interviews, group discussions and self-administered questionnaires, provided primary sources of information whilst literature reviews provided secondary sources.

The purposive sampling method was chosen because of its practicality and appropriateness to a country like Malawi, especially when compared with the other sampling methods (Lynn 2004:432). Unlike probability sampling, which gives every one chance to be selected for interview, it was not possible to visit all the twenty-seven districts from the north to the south of Malawi. With this method a sample was deliberately selected whose results can be applied to the rest of the population (Lynn 2004:531).

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (2003) states that the 1990s may be known as the decade of participatory development. The past ten (10) years have seen an explosion of participatory methods, under labels such as PRA, PPA, PLA and many more. At this juncture, it is essential to mention that the objectives, problem and delimitation of the study determined the relevance of the methodology to this study.

1.8 Research Methodology

1.8.1 Participatory Rapid Assessment (PRA)

Some authors do not treat PRA as a separate methodology as Norton et.al (2001:6) do but consider it as a particular form of qualitative research used to gain an in-depth understanding of a community or situation (Chambers, 1992). It is a form of assessment based on the participation of a range of different people including people from the community affected by the work or research. The emphasis is on participation rather than on being

particularly rapid. As Theis and Grady (1991) put it, the aim of PRA is for people to analyse their own situation, rather than to have it analysed by outsiders. Outsiders take away the information so acquired for their decisions.

The last statement makes PRA a usefully tool for any kind of community development. Since the problem for this study was to determine the development role of traditional authorities PRA is particularly relevant for extracting the perceptions of rural people who are directly affected by the status of traditional authorities as subjects. In this respect the features of PRA were used which are: triangulation, mixing techniques, flexibility and informality. Instruments, tools and techniques for gathering and analysing information particularly associated with PRA were also used which were: secondary sources, direct observation, semi-structured interviewing and ranking and scoring (see 1.7.3 for the steps taken in the research process).

Finally PRA is an appellation for Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) just as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Beneficiary Assessment are alternative names for PPA which use similar research methods that include; gathering secondary information; structured and semi-structured interviewing of individuals and groups; group discussions; direct observation; and case studies (Norton 2001:33). Let us now look at the following steps taken during the research.

1.8.1.1 Literature Review

Literature, representing secondary sources, was purposively (Lynn 2004:431, Du Plooy 1995:59 and Leedy 1993:89) selected from works presented in books, periodicals, articles and theses of other researchers in

this field, on research done on culture, decentralization and traditional authorities/chiefs vis-à-vis development, with a bias on Malawi. Although no study was identified that was carried out on this specific topic, some works discussed some aspects of this topic elsewhere, which assisted in the focus of this study.

The review acted as input into the general theoretical background analysis on the role of traditional authorities as a cultural phenomenon and on participatory approaches in development administration. In addition, the review provided a framework for discussion of the problem statement, the trends in the field and revealed the areas needing more research. The works were sourced from the National Library Services of Malawi, University of Malawi Library, National Archives of Malawi, UNESCO Library and UNISA Library. In total 200 works were consulted of which 100 were from UNISA library made available on request.

1.8.1.2 Respondents

The primary sources were divided into four categories of Local Government, Chiefs, Villagers and MASAF. Local Government category comprised of members of the Ministry of Local Government Secretariat, Decentralisation Secretariat and Lilongwe District Commissioner's Office. These represented the views of the urban people and the civil servants. The category of Chiefs comprised of Traditional Authority Malili, Group Village Headmen, and Village Headmen representing the views of traditional leaders. The category of Villagers comprised and represented the views of ordinary village people. The last category of MASAF comprised of the secretariat of MASAF and some zone officers representing the views of the social fund. The respondents were also selected through purposive sampling for the reason that apart from being accessible they would give

balanced arguments in connection with the study question. It was felt that the most suitable way to get balanced responses was “to control the variety of population interests by using subjective judgment to select a sample” (Fisher 1935: 206), which would be representative of the population. The respondents comprised of one hundred and twenty three (123) people as follows;

- eight (8) members of each of the secretariats of Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization, Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), and Lilongwe District Commissioner’s Office making a total of thirty-two (32),
- one (1) Traditional Authority (Malili),
- ten (10) group village headmen (GVH) within TA Malili area: GVH Malili, GVH Makanga, GVH Chilinza, GVH Masoankumbila, GVH Kunthulu, GVH Amali, GVH Mbingwa, GVH Bingu, GVH Chala, and GVH Mkombe,
- two (2) Village Headmen in each of the above ten group villages making a total of twenty (20),
- six (6) village members, of 25 years or above from each of the ten group villages, who were active members in community development efforts making a total of sixty (60).

1.8.1.3 Purposive sampling

In order to assess responses throughout Lilongwe District and the country as a whole, purposive sampling was used. One traditional authority, Malili, was picked from the eleven Traditional Authorities (Malawi, 1967) in the district. The only criterion used for picking this area was proximity/accessibility to the researcher. All the ten Group Village Headmen were interviewed by approaching them in their villages.

The research team comprised of three people the principal researcher, the assistant researcher and a note taker. The principal researcher gave guidance to the rest of the team on what to do and when as well as doing the principal work of asking questions, initiating discussions, analysing the information and compiling the current report. The assistant researcher assisted the principal researcher in assigned duties such as asking certain questions and verifying and clarifying information in case of uncertainties; he also did some note taking. His qualification was a degree in social science. The note taker's responsibility was to take notes as well as act as a guide because he was familiar with the geography of Traditional Malili. Further he was particularly useful during group discussions as he identified with the participants as a son of the village traditional authority. The note taker's academic qualification was a diploma in library science.

1.8.1.4 Semi-Structured Face to Face Oral Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the traditional authority, group village headmen and village headmen mainly because they were not very many as well as that it was their role in development that was being discussed and if they were interviewed in a group for instance they would give a biased concerted positive response about their own development role. Interviewing them separately ensured that village headmen would respond to questions about the role of group village men and vice versa and both would be asked about the role of traditional authority.

According to Mason (2002: 62) semi-structured interviews have four common core features: interaction or dialogue between interviewer and interviewee; relatively informal conversational interviewing as opposed to the rigid formal question and answer session; a topic by topic or theme by

theme narrative approach; and point out specific contexts within which knowledge is to be constructed or reconstructed. However, as Neuman (2000:279), Du Plooy (2001:145) and Breakwell (1995:233) state, every interview, regardless of technique, runs the risks of interviewer bias, vague questions and leading questions to mention a few of the problems associated with interviewing. These problems were minimised by emphasising more on the conversational technique, which facilitated an open exchange of feelings and opinions.

A question guide prepared in English and translated into the local Chichewa language during interviews was used to solicit oral information. However, only English texts have been prepared for public consultation (see Annex 6). The note taker took notes in English. Information gathering was done over four days from all the ten chiefs. Twenty four (24) of the thirty one (31) Chiefs interviewed were men and seven (7) were woman (see Annex 6, 02, for a complete text of the semi-structured interview questions).

1.8.1.5 Group Discussions

Group discussions were arranged among groups of twenty village community members in each of the ten villages of TA Malili using the same semi-structured interview questions used for chiefs. They were used to solicit the views of ordinary villagers as well as to check on the responses of their Chiefs. Again a question guide in English was verbally translated into Chichewa during the discussions whilst a note-taker took notes in English. This process took five days to complete. Out of the 100 villagers who responded 60 were women between the ages of 25 and 60 whilst 40 were men in the same age range.

To set the rapport with participants the facilitator, who was the principal researcher, used the note taker who came from TA Malili himself and was well known in the villages. Then the facilitator introduced topics after which discussions ensued. As Millward (1995: 310) argues, the skills of the facilitator were fundamental to the effectiveness of the group discussions (also called focus group). The facilitator was who relatively sensitive to the research issues and tried to be methodical. It required that the facilitator “guide the proceedings in a subtle way” (Millward 1995:311) and intervened only where necessary to ensure discussants did not lose focus of the discussion as well as to pose relevant questions..

1.8.1.6 Self-Administered Questionnaires

Separate questionnaires were prepared for self-administration by Ministry of Local Government comprising of Headquarters Secretariat, Decentralisation Secretariat and Lilongwe District Commission staff, within the rank of professional officer and above, and Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) Secretariat and Lilongwe Zone Officers. The questionnaire for Ministry of Local Government staff was designed specifically for the purpose of soliciting information concerning the decentralisation policy and the relations between chiefs, subjects and local government officers. The questionnaire for MASAF staff was designed specifically for the purpose of soliciting information concerning the Fund’s mission objectives, management structure as well as involvement of communities in general and chiefs in particular in the implementation of its projects. (see Annex 1 for programme of research, Annex 2 for details on analysis of responses and Annex 6,01 and 03 for examples of questions)

1.8.1.7 Direct Observation

Direct observation meant the systematic observation of events, processes, relationships and/or people's behaviors and recording these observations. This helped in cross-checking people's responses to questions against objectives and indicators of the research as well as look out for the unexpected and everything else that might be relevant to the research. As Wilkinson (1995:213) says, the advantage of direct observation is that there is "no time delay between the occurrence of the responses in question and their recording by either the observer or some recording device". Further, observations do not require verbal response to verbal stimuli. Observation required defining the category and units of behavior and events and analyzing them in terms of the study problem (Wilkinson 1995:215). The categories of units that was observed was all those involved with the welfare and status of traditional authorities which included the Government departments, development commentators, the press and ordinary Malawians and the units of behavior was what they said and did about the development role of traditional authorities.

1.8.2 Analysis and Presentation of data

The analysis and presentation was mainly in narrative form with the aid of diagrams, matrices and tables.

1.8.2.1 Ranking and Scoring

These tools were used to identify differences among traditional authorities, the main problems they face in their relationship with projects and local government authorities, their priorities and key constraints and

opportunities. Two main tools for ranking and scoring were used.

1.8.2.1.1 Ranking and scoring tool 1: Preference ranking matrixes

This was used to discuss local problems, opportunities and priority projects as identified by chiefs.

1.8.2.1.2 Ranking and scoring tool 2: Wealth (or well being) ranking

This was used to investigate local perceptions of development work and participation strategies as indicated by chiefs.

1.8.2.2Diagrams

Flow diagrams were used to show organizational chart/structure of decentralization, structure of authority as well as project administration structures.

1.8.2.3Illustrations

Illustrations were used to discuss current situations, constraints, problems and opportunities in the role of chiefs as viewed by higher authorities and the media.

1.8.3 Making inferences to the population from which the sample was drawn

The task of making inferences involved looking at the key responses by the sample units and applying prior knowledge of legislation, behavior patterns

and other characteristics of the larger population to arrive at representativity and derive general conclusions on the topic for the Malawian society as a whole.

1.8.4 Presenting the results in logical format

This stage involved preparation of data through coding, scoring, editing and then analysis. Coding is the conversion of verbatim answers to categorized data. A combination of pre-coded answers for respondents to choose from where possible and a coding frame for fitting verbatim answers into categories devised after the event where pre-coding was not possible was made. Manual editing and analysis revealed data, which did not exactly conform to the specification implicit in the logical structure of the questions and the response categories for individual indicator questions. These arose due to such issues as: interviewer failed to ask questions, respondent overlooked the question; respondent misunderstood the question and mistakes in transcription of information.

1.8.5 Triangulation:

As a way of crosschecking the quality of information gathered and accuracy to avoid biases, use of triangulation was made which was tested in a pilot project. This meant combining different research tools simultaneously to collect and analyze data. In this regard, literature review, semi-structured face to face interviews, self administered questionnaires and direct observation were used simultaneously to arrive at unbiased conclusion.

1.8.6 Pilot Project

To check on the relevance of the questions and the responses, before they were administered, the questionnaires and structured interviews were trial

tested on nine colleagues at the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO. Six colleagues below professional officer level responded to the interview questions in Chichewa (local language) and three at professional officer level responded to the questionnaires in English.

1.8.7 Writing the Report

The report writing process involved arrangement of the information and data into sections and chapters and expanding the points into readable form. The conclusion was written first, followed by the introduction and then the body was last. At the very end the conclusion and the introduction were revisited for uniformity. Apart from the supervisor, colleagues read the report and gave such varying and sometimes contradictory comments, which, nevertheless, helped in the subsequent editing and improvement of the report. They also revealed the weaknesses in the approach and methodology of the research and possibilities to improve the report.

1.8.8 Obstacles During the Research

An expose about developments in a community on a topic such as this should be based on an investigation of several aspects; social, economic, artistic, intellectual and cultural. What is written about the community will depend on the nature of available sources and resources, the specific objective of the particular study and the tools of analysis, which the author is able to command. This study is not an exception to this observation.

The study was conducted in a relatively small area within the District of Lilongwe and covered rural Traditional Authority Malili (Central Eastern Malawi) and the City of Lilongwe (Central Malawi). It focussed

specifically on the relations between Chiefs (representing local culture), community projects and local authorities. The primary sources of information were broadly of two types, the more educated city dwellers and the less educated rural people. It was easier to collect information from respondents in the City than in rural areas. The roads to the villages in TA Malili were dusty and full of potholes making travelling slow. The villages were situated 20 kilometres from Lilongwe City and on average 5 kilometres from each other. The task was made easier through planning and allocation of specific times to be in one place or the other. Appointments had to be made with respondents in the same geographical area at times that would minimise movement. However, financial limitations mitigated the ease and made possible only six visits (six days) to TA Malili.

Another threat to the research was non-response of some respondents especially in the City where some questionnaires were sent by post or e-mail. The solution became to go with a fresh questionnaire, wait for it while the respondent filled in, and then take it back.

Further, during the interviews, there was no recording equipment such as a transcriber or a tape recorder to capture the proceedings as permanent records. However, TA Malili provided his official stamp as testimony of the visit of the researcher to headquarters.

1.9 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 discusses the methodology used in the survey. The qualitative

methodology was substantially used with the aid of three instruments to collect information: structured one-to-one interviews, self-administered questionnaires and a participatory methodology instrument of group discussions. The research was carried out in Traditional Authority Malili among Chiefs and village members and in Lilongwe City among Local Government officials and Malawi Social Action Fund officials. Respondents were, therefore, divided into four categories of Local Government, Chiefs, Villagers and MASAF (Malawi Social Action Fund).

Chapter 2 looks at the theoretical perspectives on linkages between development, participation and chiefs. It critically examines how chiefs have been positioned in development approaches and the theory of development administration. It argues for the central role of chiefs in mobilization of indigenous communication channels and indigenous knowledge in a participatory development approach.

The chapter notes that development has been defined in various ways depending on the thinking of the particular time ranging from economic focus in the 1960s and 70s, to human, environmental, social and currently participatory focus over the successive decades. Further the chapter presents various authors' understanding of participatory development administration and the role of chiefs. It presents a viewpoint derived from the consolidation of the arguments of the literature that chiefs deserve to be considered as indigenous development administrators because they are involved in the execution of public law and organise collective efforts in the achievement of particular objectives as determined by the economic and political process.

Chapter 3 discusses the cultural dimensions of chiefs' role in development.

It argues that most anthropologists are quick to note that culture is an abstract and complex concept; thus, many definitions of culture exist. Most definitions of culture, however, contain some common elements. They note that culture exists at two levels; the observable (tangible) traces or indicators of the culture and the unobservable (intangible) forces present in the society or organization or whatever the entity might be. The chapter then looks at the formation and transmission of culture in a community as well as different perceptions about participation of chiefs in the development process. It views Chiefs as a cultural factor.

Chapter 4 discusses the importance of decentralisation in inclusive decision-making. It identifies the fundamental principles of inclusive decision-making and how they can be used in a decentralised system of public administration.

The chapter notes that there is a significant potential in culture to organise communities at the grassroots level for successful development projects through the resource qualities of chiefs. It further notes that many authors have studied the relationship between chieftains and the state in Africa from the pre-colonial, through colonial to post-colonial periods. The studies have revealed that there is a power struggle between Local Governments and Traditional Authorities. The chapter then examines this power struggle to provide the basis from which to assess the development role of chiefs vis-à-vis the decentralisation process in Malawi. The chapter concludes that the type of decentralisation that allows for the participation of chiefs and communities in development in a democratic way is that which provides for devolution of power and authority to lower level administrative structures as opposed to deconcentration. It notes that in the decentralisation structure chiefs are vested with the responsibility to chair the Village Development

Committees (VDC) who initiate projects with communities. Area Development Committees (ADC) approve the projects. Chiefs are also ex-officio members of these committees. District assemblies approve projects from area development committees through the District Development Committees where Chiefs are also ex-officio members (Malawi 2000)

Chapter 5 looks at social funds and examines what their objectives and components are and how useful they are in achieving participatory development which takes into account local socio-cultural factors such as traditional authorities.

Chapter 6 looks at the findings of the study, which reveal several important facts. The history of local government in general and decentralisation in particular is relatively recent in Malawi. Although local government officials claim that chiefs were oriented on the decentralisation process the majority of chiefs appeared unaware of it. The position of chiefs has become precarious because they are not put in the picture of what is going on due to power struggle between them and local government officials. Local government authorities have more resources by virtue of being close to the central government whilst chiefs have the authority of the rural masses where their power is derived.

The chapter also notes that (Malawi Social Action Fund) MASAF is one of the few successful projects in Malawi that create social wealth for the rural communities. One of its strengths is its use of chiefs to mobilise communities to participate in development projects. Chiefs have been portrayed as being central to the achievements of MASAF (MASAF 2000).

Chapter 7 makes recommendations, especially for those external

development partners coming to make interventions in Malawi for the first time, on the use of the participatory cultural approach that involves Chiefs in order to ensure the highest possible level of community participation in projects.

Chapter 8 makes conclusions. It argues that the struggle for supremacy between Chiefs and local government authorities has become more pronounced at the advent of decentralisation. Chiefs are at an advantage over local government in the sense that they are guardians and embodiments of tradition and culture and they present a forum for the articulation, debate resolution and defence of local interests. These factors give them an advantage over local government authorities who have to work more to attain the same level of acceptability of their authority over Chiefs despite that they have more financial resources than Chiefs. However, the chapter concludes that Chiefs and local government authorities in Malawi need to work together for the betterment of the local communities.

CHAPTER 2

SOME THEORETICAL LINKAGES BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT, PARTICIPATION AND THE CULTURAL FACTOR

2.1 Introduction

“For more than two decades now, growing worldwide attention has been focused on the dynamics of development and development administration in developing nations. The United Nations has sponsored development decades; rich countries pay much lip service to development; and millions of poor people in several developing nations have set development as their most sought-after goal”. (Hope, 1984:3)

The above quote was true in 1984 and is true even today, two decades later. In spite of the efforts alluded to by Hope (1984:3), some developing countries in Southern Africa including Malawi are nowhere near the level of development that existed even in the Europe of the 70s. And yet what is central to current efforts, since the practical ambitions of development theory have been reduced over the years, is whether human beings can act, collectively, to improve their lot or whether they must once again accept that their destiny is unavoidably determined by forces – nowadays ‘world market forces and globalization’ (van Damme 2002:23) – over which they have, in general, little or no control.

This Chapter focuses on the argument that if all the development efforts are to bear sustainable results in Malawi, they should ensure the involvement of the Traditional Authorities (Chapel 1982:30). To make this possible, the Malawi Government and development agencies must embark on a redefinition of development and development administration to reflect the now undisputable fact that the development of a country is ultimately and intimately tied to its socio-cultural context. To assist in this redefinition, the following sections will look at the trends in development thinking and examine how the participation of chiefs in development efforts has been treated over the years.

The objectives of this chapter are therefore to:

- i) Critically examine how chiefs have been positioned in development approaches and in development administration and;
- ii) Argue for the central role of chiefs in mobilization of indigenous communication channels and indigenous knowledge in a participatory development approach.

2.2 The Debate on the Definition of Development Administration.

Development has been defined in a number of ways incorporating various elements of the social, political, cultural and economic systems, which provide specific fields to work in. It has been plagued with ever-changing definitions and policy applications to the extent that the methods advocated for achieving development have multiplied at a faster rate than they have been applied in some developing nations such as Malawi.

Some schools of thought have concentrated on describing the criteria of development and underdevelopment; others have defined their stages. These approaches tend to define development in terms of reference to a universal linear mode. Thus Rostow (1960:4-16), the most famous advocate of unilinear theory, wrote that, when assessing the degree of economic development, it would be fair to say that every society is passing through one of the following five phases: (a) traditional society; (b) conditions preliminary to take-off; (c) take-off; (d) progress towards maturity; and (e) the period of mass consumption (Colin 1986:66).

Development sociologists, following Merton and Talcott Parsons, leave the field of politics to adopt an approach which, while similar to that of Rostow in some respects, tries to explain social change as deriving from within.

According to them, development is intrinsic to the structure concerned, whereas change may be brought about through the influence of external factors (Nisbet 1970:177).

The Marxist school favours the search for a general law governing the development of human societies, with a variety of modes of production and the socialist mode of production leading on to communism, which was expected to take over its place. But the various schools of thought based on Marx differ from one another concerning the rigidity with which the process will take place in practice (Colin 1986:67; Marx 1977:719). Whilst Marx spoke of an Asian mode of production we can now talk about an African and, to go further, a distinctly Malawian one (as in the now renowned Japanese mode of production).

The dynamist school of sociologists such as Balander, Gluckman and Leach (Colin 1986:66) see social change, of which development is one manifestation among others, as the result not of any strict determinism but of the interplay of both internal and external forces. This means that development cannot be the result of a predetermined path but a path rife with continual re-assessment and changes towards progress and betterment of the well being of the community. Development therefore, as understood by these thinkers and for the purposes of the present study, must be understood from both political and scientific point of view, that is, as social project and social phenomenon. Participation is the expression of a political project, and its mechanisms can only be defined in relation to the structure of existing socio-cultural relations and to the forces which influence them, whether from within or from without.

UNESCO (2000:25) defines development in general as “a complex, holistic

and multidimensional process, which goes beyond mere economic growth and integrates all the dimensions of life and all the energies of a community.”

However, some authors define development in specific contexts. For instance, Jacobs and Cleveland (1999:1) describe social development as “the process of organizing human energies and activities at higher levels to achieve greater results”. They further argue that such development “increases the utilization of human potential”.

Two important aspects can be discerned from the preceding two definitions: the aspects of development being a ‘process’ and ‘unrestricted’. Whereas the first aspect is clearly stated in both definitions, the latter is implied in the UNESCO definition by the words ‘complex, holistic and multidimensional’ and in Jacobs and Cleveland definition by the words ‘human energies’ and ‘greater results’.

The argument that development is an unrestricted process means that the development policies that were being followed in the past were missing a very crucial condition for success. Until recently, development in the minds of those influencing the prescriptions of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank towards development strategies meant only economic development (UNESCO 1995:53). In Malawi this perception is evidence by the mobilization of resources and mass energies towards agricultural production which saw Malawi being labeled a ‘star performer’ in Southern Africa in the 1970s. Today, development, especially social development, is determined by underlying processes rather than by surface activities and results (Alexander 1992:14-15), since development activities, policies, strategies, programs and results will always be limited to a specific

context or circumstance. Given this argument, the role of traditional authorities in the Malawian context becomes central as the bridge within the administrative machinery between the development intervention and the socio-cultural situation on which the participation of the community is based.

In retrospect, the role of traditional authorities in Malawi has always been central even in the 1970s agriculture-driven years of “star” performance. They were used as community mobilization agents in adoption of new agricultural techniques claiming much of the credit for the successes of the time. Perhaps this can be attributed to the development approaches that were fashionable at the time.

2.3 How Development Approaches Have Viewed Traditional Authorities

Several trends in development approaches will be noted here and critically examined to see how they have viewed chiefs and community participation. Since the early 1960s there has been a significant change in attempts to study development administration. The change has been from normative to empirical approaches. To explain the effect on administrators as they went through these changes Riggs (1987:23-40) developed what he termed “the theory of prismatic society” in which people hold two ideals at once, switching from the traditional set of behaviors to the modern without apparent embarrassment or confusion. This is particularly the case with chiefs in Malawi.

Another study worth mentioning here is that done by Packard (1972:75) on critical path analysis. Critical path means those activities that, taken together, determine the shortest overall possible time of the project. This does not demarcate between modern and traditional approaches but looks at

the most rational way of ensuring successful implementation of a development project. However, different approaches have mushroomed over the years, which try to guide development administration.

2.3.1 Basic needs and the role of Traditional Authorities in their identification

The 1970s ushered in an era in which development theory focused on the basic needs approach. The primary objective of the basic needs approach to development is to provide opportunities for the full physical, mental and social development of the individual (EOLSS 2002:418). It differs conceptually from other poverty-oriented development strategies in several ways. Firstly, whereas conventional antipoverty programmes are directed at targeting poverty groups within an economy, the basic needs approach is founded on the premise that poverty in developing countries is wide-spread and that action must be directed at the population as a whole (Marais 1992:35). Secondly, the basic needs approach is concerned with significantly increasing the supply of basic goods and services as opposed to merely raising the incomes of the poor to a minimum subsistence level. Actually, basic needs policies are not restricted to the eradication of absolute poverty but extend to the satisfaction of needs over and above the subsistence level as a means of eliminating relative poverty through a continuous process of economic development and social progress. This argument is the core of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1976:69-74). Maslow arranged needs in terms of higher and lower order needs. He argued that as the lower order needs are satisfied the higher order ones arise. He further argued that satisfaction of human needs begins with the physiological ones followed by the need for safety, belongingness and love and then self-esteem. He saw self-actualization as the basic need of the highest order (Marais 1992:35)

In spite of Maslow's model, which is quite useful and more so at the individual level, in defining the objectives and distinguishing features of a basic-needs policy approach, recognition must be given to the fact that countries will have different requirements because of differences in their economic, social, political and cultural characteristics (Masini 2002:204).

In 1976 in the Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action of the World Employment Conference, the International Labor Organization (ILO 1997:24) stated that the basic needs in no circumstances should be taken to mean the minimum necessary for subsistence; it should be placed within a context of national independence, the dignity of individuals and peoples and their freedom to chart their destiny without hindrance.

The basic-needs approach also stresses effective mass participation in both the formulation and implementation of policy measures as a way of ensuring that its main objective is not forgotten (Tri 1986:37-38).

The basic needs approach also touches on the concept of 'appropriate technology'. Technology can be defined as the skills, knowledge and procedures used in the provision of goods and services for any given society. Not only do the individual's basic needs include love, belonging and self respect but also the mechanisms by which basic needs are met may promote or discourage a dynamic development process (Elis 1981:15). The basic needs approach suggests that due to the unique features of each developing economy, technology must be discussed in the context of what is appropriate. It implies that if the problem is regarded as a technological gap and similar technology is applied to the two groups of countries (developed and less developed), the real economic gap will increase rather

than decline unless other measures are taken (Ndangko and Anyang 1981: 35).

Some of its chief movers Elis (1981:30) and Drucker (1970:10) say that the concept of appropriate technology must be looked at only in relation to some specific historical context and in terms of demand and supply. Such technology must contribute to greater productive employment opportunities, elimination of poverty and the achievement of an equitable distribution of income.

The concept therefore, argues that any particular technology is not an end in itself. The criterion of appropriateness for the choice of technology transferred must be found in the goals of the basic needs approach to development. As Jaquier (1976:20) states “ appropriate technology represents what one might call the social and cultural dimension of innovation. The idea here is that the value of new technology lies not only in its economic viability and its technical soundness but in its adaptation to the local social and cultural environment. Assessing the appropriateness of a technology necessarily implies some sort of value judgments both on the part of those who develop it and those who will be using it”. This means that appropriate technology transfers from the rich nations to the poor nations must not depend on the uncertain generosity of the rich nations, but be based on some internationally accepted measures of the poor nations. In turn, the poor nations must ensure that such technology is the one that is required to raise the standard of living of the poor majority, which are mostly concentrated in the rural areas.

The Malawi 2000 census shows that ninety eight (98) percent of the population is found in the rural areas (Malawi 2000). What this eventually

means for traditional authorities is that they are at the center of assisting government to prioritize the basic needs of the communities under their influence.

2.3.2 The demise of economic development approach and rise of socio-culturalism

The theory of economic development was developed on the basis of the experiences of the western countries in the nineteenth century. For many years this meant almost everyone looked at the development of poor countries solely in terms of economic goals. Development meant activities that result in rising gross national product, an increase in investment and consumption and a rising standard of living in terms of higher incomes, longer life expectancy, lower infant mortality and more education (Jacobs and Cleveland 1999:1). It further states that at some point a developing economy would become strong enough and complex enough to take off towards industrial heights scaled by so many countries in the Northern Hemisphere (Hope 1984:5; Schaffer 1982:71). The latter statement implies a unidirectional, controlled series of activities leading to the results mentioned above. These results are no doubt important and valid for quality life but the route to achieving them is no longer unidirectional (Kasdan 1973:10). Today the shift is towards enabling conditions, strategies and public policies for achieving those results such as peace, democracy, social freedoms, equal access, laws, institutions, markets, infrastructure, education and technology (Jacobs et.al 1999:3).

Apart from Jacobs and Hope, Hunter (1971:1) also argues that the tools of the economics centered Keynes and Breton Woods types of development also were quite clearly anything that could help get the engines of

investment, production and consumption moving in the individual poor country. This meant an inflow of capital goods and technical advice from rich countries. This theory worked in some countries like South Korea and Taiwan where production of goods and services leaped upward helped by US aid and defense outlays, until these countries began to leave poverty behind (Hunter, 1971:2). Today there is growing conviction among theorists and practitioners alike that external forces alone have never unleashed a process of social development, and there are countless instances in which external agents have failed to do so (Jacobs et al 1999:3).

Development was regarded as a linear path along which all countries traveled. Within this theory are several approaches ranging from the Breton Woods financial and trading regimes, through the Keynes wartime and postwar practices of state intervention in the economy and modernization, to the dependency and capitalist development approaches of the seventies (Seers 1969:3). The poor countries later caught up with the theorists to argue that development could not only be measured in terms of growth in GNP (Seers 1969:3). Countries were particularly concerned about the inability of the theory to address issues of economic justice, social equality and political development, the nature and rate of change, the internal consistency of the development process and income distribution (Kasdan 1973:11).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, many foreign Africanists and many African Social Scientists, not to mention educated people in general and especially the youth, broadly accepted dependency theory as opposed to its predecessors. But, according to Leys (Leys, 1996:14), there was a further problem. Outside the Republic of South Africa the level of development in few

countries had yet to produce either a local national capitalist class or a local labor movement that had the capacity to lead national development along any alternative development path even if such a path could be plausibly specified.

Under the economic development approach development therefore, was seen primarily as economic growth, and it was taken for granted that organizing a march along the development path was the prime concern of government. It never considered participation of grassroots organizations and the socio-cultural context as having any significant impact on the direction and level of development until the late 70s ushered in a new group of theorists unveiling the social, political and cultural dimensions of development.

2.3.3 Rise of the sustainable, human and social development approach.

According to Seers (1977:2-7), after dissatisfaction with the economic development approach many theorists and leaders of developing Third World Countries, argued that before there was development there was no underdevelopment and that the relationship between development and underdevelopment is not just a comparative one. Their emphasis then shifted to regarding development as a process involving economic, environmental, human and social elements.

The Brundtland Report of 1987 popularized the idea of sustainable development in its application to environmental sustainability (UNESCO 2000:25). This report qualifies the requirement of economic growth, by setting it in a larger historical and ecological framework: genuine growth must not use up resources faster than they can be renewed, or today's riches

will be the direct cause of tomorrow's poverty and the living will flourish by stripping the earth of its assets and leaving it bare, unable to support future generations. By doing so it offered a critic of the unsustainability of certain Western development modes, which were then being held up as models for the developing nations.

The environment is where all human beings live and development is what they all do in attempting to improve their lot within that abode. The two are inseparable (UNESCO 2000:25). Furthermore, those political leaders who may too easily feel that their own countries have reached a plateau towards which other nations must strive must recognize development issues as crucial. Many of the development paths of the industrialized nations are clearly unsustainable. The development decisions of these countries, because of their great economic and political power, will have a profound effect upon the ability of peoples to sustain human progress for generations to come.

Sustainability is also used to refer to the capacity of an organization or set of activities to become self-supporting. A sustainable livelihood means that individuals or groups have the capacity to maintain or improve their social, political, economic and other opportunities, without jeopardizing the opportunities of others or of the future generations, and to survive 'shocks' and sudden changes, going beyond them to create new opportunities (UNESCO 2000:26; UNDP 1994:12).

Human development, as the term has been used by UNDP in determining the concepts and methodology of its annual Human Development Report (UNDP 1994:10), proposes to measure the progress of a country towards development through a variety of indicators which, while they are all

quantitative, go well beyond the merely economic, to include such factors as sexual discrimination, health, education and training, and even political freedom.

The Human Development Report (UNDP 1994:2) defines human development as a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible.

But human development does not end there. Additional choices, highly valued by many people, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights.

Human development has two sides: the formation of human capabilities – such as improved health, knowledge and skills – and the use that people make of their acquired capabilities – for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social and political life (UNDP 2001:1).

Echoing this argument, the 1995 Copenhagen Summit for Sustainable Development (TICAD 2003:2) established three major priorities for action towards which the international community must undertake to work: the eradication of poverty; the implementation of full employment; and the pursuit of social integration. Several authors argued that the principal aim of development had become to improve not only the economic but also the social welfare of a nation (Hope, 1979a:11-24; Kasdan 1973:10). This was

to be brought about not through reliance on external assistance but through national effort and targeted at removing all signs of external economic dependence.

This approach to development stressed the importance of local considerations in the formulation of development policies and programs. Local needs and values were supposed to determine the direction development would take in a particular country, and local institutions would be responsible for carrying it out (Kasdan, 1973:10).

The lack of development advances in most Third World countries tells of their inability to practice to the fullest the tenets of this approach which basically saw development as development of every man and woman – and not just the growth of things which are merely means (Seers 1977:5). Much as development was supposed to be geared towards the satisfaction of needs, beginning with the need of the poor who constitute the world's majority, at the same time development was seen to ensure the humanization of man by the satisfaction of man's needs for expression, creativity, conviviality and deciding man's own destiny. Development was supposed to be an integral, value-loaded, cultural process and encompassing the natural, environmental and social relations – education, production, consumption and well-being (Seers 1977:6; Schumacher 1974:40). It was supposed to be endogenous and spring from the heart of each society, which would rely first on its own strength and resources and define in sovereignty the vision of its future; cooperating with societies sharing its problems and aspirations (Seers 1977:5-6). It argued that development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their education, organization and discipline. Without these three all resources remain latent, untapped potential.

Both the Third World countries themselves and the inadequacies within the theory itself share the blame for the failure of this approach. Firstly, the African countries for instance did not take a firm stand to implement the tenets of this approach. Instead what can be observed from the history of most of these countries, in the 70s and 80s is either factional wars or internal oppression of the populace, including Malawi, by the indigenous leaders when they took-over the reigns of power from the colonial regimes in those that attained independence in the 60s, and liberation wars in those where colonial masters were reluctant to relinquish power (Kriger 1991:125-130, Manungo 1991:122).

Secondly, as Ncube and Nzombe (1991:167-180) argued as they commented on the colonial history of Zimbabwe, the developed countries fiercely and ingeniously repelled any attempts at complete sovereignty of their former colonies through national and international legislation and sponsoring of dissenting groups in their former colonies and protectorates. Legislation and treaties that were enacted and signed became subject to international law that governed ownership of land and property even where they were originally acquired by force of displacement of the local people (Williams 1991:62-63).

Thirdly, the approach itself does not do much in moving away from making economic activity the basis of development. It maintains an economic core. It falls short of emphasizing the crucial role of culture and effective community participation as providing the basis for take off to sustainable development.

2.3.4 Leveling the playing field: The new international economic

order (NIEO)

The concept of a NIEO is one embodying institutional arrangements that promote the economic and social progress of the developing countries in the context of an expanding world economy. It is a framework of rules and institutions regulating the relations among sovereign nations. It stands for a new way of ordering the international economic system to bring about improved terms of trade between the then center and periphery countries; more control by the periphery over the world economic cycles that pass through them; and increased and improved trade among the periphery countries themselves (Galtung, 1980:29-30).

The NIEO emerged in the 1980s to try and address the inequities and inadequacies of the preceding approaches and the then existing international economy that perpetuated poverty and inequality, between countries and within countries (Abdel – Fadil, Crips and Wells 1977:205).

The NIEO effectively meant that the developing countries must do as much as possible for themselves on the basis of their own resources. It also meant that collectively the developing countries must exploit every possible advantage for maximizing the positive effects of the NIEO by cooperation among themselves (Adel-Fidel et al 1977:207). By self-reliance was meant autonomy of decision-making and full mobilization of a society's own initiative and direction. It further meant rejection of the principle of exploitative appropriation of others' resources (Castro 1983:24).

With the emergence of NIEO also emerged among critics the concept of neo-colonialism, which argued the new economic order posed even greater threat to the development of Third World countries in the form of International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and donor countries'

conditionalities for borrowing money (Hope 1979a:14). The critics argued that interests charged on these 'grants' would enslave the recipient countries to a life time of debt serving which will be inherited by generations after generations on end and never really get paid off. Developing countries have argued that the real burden of external debt is simply the giving up of real resources as interest and amortization payments. As the French President Jacques Chirac once said "For the debt burden to remain manageable, the industrial nations must make loan concessions to the Least Developing Countries (LDCs) or cancel them completely" (Chirac 2002).

In spite of their basic concern for the stability of the international financial system, their general abhorrence of the notions of cancellation or default and their belief in principles of good economic management, some industrial countries and major financial institutions, under pressure from international civil society, have recently made concessions for debt cancellation for some selected countries with good economic management (read debt servicing) record and working democracies (World Bank 2003:25).

Under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPCI) which has taken center stage in recent debt management talks purports to redirect debt servicing money towards the social services of the host countries (Chapfunya 2003:4). Under the initiative by the World Bank, poor countries will have their debts cancelled if that money can effectively and in a transparent manner be directed towards essential social services and disaster mitigation sectors. The countries were made to produce strategy papers such as Malawi's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP), which were used to assess them for qualification for the HIPCI funding

(Malawi Government 2003).

It is the aspect of transparency and effectiveness in the use of the released funds for social services that importance and usefulness of traditional authorities can be envisaged. The important role that traditional authorities play in this aspect is undoubtedly the mobilization of communities, the identification and prioritization of the participation of essential social services needed in their communities to participate in as the success of Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), which will be dealt with later, will demonstrate (MASAF 2002:4).

2.3.5 Evolution of the participation approach

As Tri (1986:36-37) observes, the concept of participation has gone through several stages and is linked to various successive currents:

Popularly known as 'dialogue with the people' elementary, formal participation has been a favourite of the religious institutions to convert believers to their own doctrines (Tri 1986:36-37; Karin 1978:37).

Roland Colin (1986:68) talks of behaviourist and 'conditioned' participation as a kind of social mobilisation achieved by various kinds of socio-psychological techniques, educational media and cultural mechanisms, which makes wide use of the organisation of cultural activities, personal motivation and the training of leaders (elites trained according to a preconceived model). This is often implemented by experts from former colonial powers in countries that were previously under colonial rule. Its limitation is that it does not take sufficiently into account the true needs and aspirations of the developing countries (Colin 1986:69; Supek 1986:126).

Integrationist participation considers that 'union' or assimilation is the best means of participation. Its action is based on 'social integration', 'cultural integration' or 'socialisation' (Tri 1986:37; Mushi 1986:266). Very often effective at the economic level (for dealing with unemployment, social disturbances etc), it, however, raises problems at the cultural level because, as in any kind of integration it attempts to assimilate populations to preconceived models (instrumental participation) (Colin 1986:62).

Participation regarded as a social process, global, many sided, multidimensional and multicultural, which seeks to involve all populations groups in every stage of development (Tri 1986:34). Viewed in this light participation constitutes nothing less than a 'blueprint for society' centred on an open and self-improving theory drawing upon the major currents of thought of our time: this is the most advanced concept of participation (Tri 1986:34).

The latter concept is the more acceptable mode of participation that is propounded here and requires further discussion. Participation being a global process and the main component of a national political scheme implies that a political commitment on the part of the state, to give it a truly nationwide scope, is required.

Participation being a many-sided process, it can take various forms of social, cultural and corporate activity, traditional organisational activities, union activities, ecological activities, scientific, literary or philosophical activities (Tri 1986:35; UNESCO 1980:3-5).

Participation as a multidimensional process derives legitimacy not from the state alone but from elsewhere as well: from the traditional socio-cultural and ethical legitimacy upon which the rural communities in the developing countries such as Malawi are based (Supek 1986:159).

Participation as a multicultural process seeks to cover all the cultural and ethnic components of society. This does not mean 'integration' or 'incorporation', but involvement on an equal footing: participation implicitly legitimises the right to be different, to experiment and to make mistakes (Franco 1986:288).

On the basis of the main features of participation discussed above some basic elements for its promotion can be identified. Participation presupposes that the socio-cultural environment is that of open mindedness and tolerance allowing for self-improvement through democratic reception of contributions from various social classes (Tri 1986:38; Supek 1998:224; Franco: 1986:290). On contributions by forces external to the society, they should be vigorously screened before being taken up. The 'participatory philosophy' should not be the government's theory alone but should permeate the fabric of society down to the poorest villager in order to be the driving and guiding force behind national development (Chabou 1986:308) which leads to "strong participation". Participation therefore, is not just a spirit, legislation or institutions, which leads to "weak participation": it is a climate, an atmosphere.

In order to be strong, participation should form part of an overall political strategy in which the pro-participation forces within society combine to convince and contain the anti-participation forces (Tri 1986:37).

For participation to be effective there should be as few intermediaries as possible between the decision-making centres and the participatory bases. The intermediaries such as chiefs and donor agents, should be legitimised by the local socio-cultural context to instil confidence and trust in the participatory bases. Further, development planning is not the privilege of an elitist group of professionals and experts; the creativity of development planning depends on its being rooted in the living socio-cultural process (Kelbar 1986:338; Tri 1986:39). As such, in the Malawian context, the participation of chiefs and rural masses is enhanced by the establishment of local governments which are effectively decision making centres brought closer to them. This makes it easier for cultural factors to be understood and given the recognition they deserve for their role in development.

The following quote summarises the basis for integration of cultural factors in the development process.

“Cultural diversity must be born in mind. Each human group has its own values, standards, behavioural, economic, social and family models, relations, knowledge or rationality, skills and know-how. Hasty assimilation is therefore not possible, nor can it be assumed that spiritual and ethical values are similar across all societies, even if there are some shared values. It is therefore not possible to impose predetermined development models, even in the area of human development”. (UNESCO 2000:35)

Growing international disenchantment with the exclusively economic model of development, which more often provide rigid prescriptions, necessitated a shift of focus to human development, social development and now participatory development approach (UNESCO 2000:24-31).

Although the social development approach gave a more specific sense to the way in which development must try to define itself beyond purely economic criteria, it retained an economic core. The lack of effective involvement of the populations in those development actions, which were

being undertaken for their benefit either through multilateral or bilateral co-operation, did not become an important issue until the mid seventies and eighties (80s). By then, a sufficient number of development projects had failed and debt had become unserviceable for some least developed countries so that the effectiveness of external support as a substitute for endogenous development became questionable. Participatory methodologies ensure the participation of grassroots communities through acknowledgement of the cultural dimension of development (UNESCO 2003:32).

Because of the failure of exclusive dependence on external support, and also because it coincided with the search for more democratic social and economic processes, participatory development was propounded in the late eighties and early nineties by institutions such as UNESCO and World Bank as a new governing principle for self-development in all countries (World Bank: 1996:3). Since then, a range of applications of these ideas to development work have been gradually adopted and explored throughout the development institutions (UNESCO 2000:28). However, participatory development as a concept is not exclusive of the sustainable, human and social development concepts as they all represent complementary perspectives motivated by sustainability and justice.

The search for sustainability and justice has led to a growing awareness of the essential role of social structures in securing equitable and enduring patterns of development (World Bank 1996:5). In Malawi, this realisation has in turn made developers aware of the impact that culture can have on the outcome of development strategies and projects (UNESCO 2000:31). This awareness was first formulated when a few development agencies began to talk about factors ensuring sustainability, among which socio-

cultural aspects were listed (United Nations Development Programme 1995).

According to the World Bank standards the key characteristic of a participatory approach is the collaborative stance the project sponsors and designers take in carrying out these steps so that stakeholders influence and share control over the decisions that are made (World Bank 1996:3). The stance can either be external expert stance or participatory stance. In the external expert stance, the activities of setting objectives, diagnosis and formulation of strategies and tactics are undertaken by the sponsors to prepare a project for financing. These externally positioned sponsors and designers are substantive experts in the subject matter they are investigating. They determine what the project will look like. There is a measure of consultation with and listening to local people, which is a prerequisite to participation, but in itself is not enough to ensure sustainability. (World Bank 1996:4). This cannot be equated to participation because the sponsors do not always listen to all the people or even consult poor and disadvantaged members of society. Further, no matter how good the sponsors and designers are at consultation and listening, what misses is learning on the part of the people in the local system. The consultant learns more than the person being consulted does.

The so-called experts design strategies that require behaviour and cultural changes or creation, on the part of people, who are accustomed to behaving in a significantly different way, of different institutional arrangements (World Bank 1996:4). The difficulty lies in the inability of local people to learn and adopt the value and rationale of new social behaviours as specified by the expert. It is not enough to learn from a plan for people to take new actions effectively when the plan does not originate from the

people themselves (World Bank 1996:4; Tri 1986:37). If behavioural and organisational changes are necessary, then the people whose behaviour has to change should create the change and commit themselves to it. This process can only effectively be facilitated by the involvement of traditional authorities.

Malawi's Local Government Act of 1998 section 3 states that the role of district assemblies is "to further the constitutional order based on democratic principles, accountability, transparency and participation of the people in the decision making and development process" (Malawi 1998). Hussein (2003:275) argues "there is great expectation among policy makers and the enlightened citizens for an increased public role in local governance". While the above quotes suggest that there is the will among all concerned to see greater participation of communities, there is lack of a clear strategy on how to ensure that this happens. Save for their inclusion in the development committees, as chairmen and ex officio members, there is deliberate non-mention of the bridging and community mobilising role of traditional authorities. Local Government Authorities lack this bridging and community mobilising social legitimacy and ignoring traditional authorities' comparative advantage in this respect perpetuates chiefs' marginalisation in the decentralisation process. Such non-acknowledgement of this crucial role of traditional authorities only proves the fact that there is pervasiveness in the negative perceptions on the development role of traditional authorities.

Suffice it to mention that for the marginalisation, not only of Chiefs but also of the entire rural communities, to end, basic principles of the participatory approaches as suggested by the World Bank (1996:5) should be adhered to with slight modifications as follows:

- 1 “There must be a change in the behaviour of external development workers, achieved through self-criticism and role reversal and by listening to rural population and their traditional authorities, with the intention to gain greater understanding of indigenous systems.
- 2 There must be a continuous enrichment of learning methods through input from the people themselves.
- 3 There must be a continuous process of mutual dialogue, learning and teaching between development workers and the community.”

In addition it is suggested here that a fourth principle is adhered to:

- 4 Before any suggestions for development are made participatory research should be conducted to bring to light the community’s priorities.

2.3.5.1 Use of Indigenous Communication in Participatory Research

Less than a decade ago, advocates of participation struggled to persuade skeptical mainstream development agencies of the merits of a participatory approach to research. Today participatory methodologies are routinely used and have become an expected, if not even required, part of development practice (Gaventa 1998:3)

What makes research “participatory” is less the kinds of methods that are used than the methodology, the overarching epistemological and ethical framework, which guides their use (Lucas and Cornwall 2002:13). What distinguishes “participatory research” from other forms of research is the degree of control and involvement that participants have in determining the scope and themes of enquiry, in generating data, in analysis and in the generation of recommendations or solutions (Gaventa 1993:25; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995:1670)

Under the umbrella of “participatory approaches”, methods gained credibility in the course of the 1990s (Guijt and Braden 1999:21-23). Participatory Rural Appraisal is one approach that has gained ground and spurred a generation of hybrids, such as Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs). In terms of what is now regarded as the primary development objective, poverty reduction, both the World Bank and Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom have been the prime movers in what has become the widespread use of PPAs precisely for their perceived benefits in providing the insights and ideas of poor people themselves. Donors encourage the use of PPAs by developing countries as an instrument for including the perspectives of poor people in the analysis of poverty and the formulation of strategies to reduce it (World Bank 1996:30). The major advantage of participatory methodology in Malawi is the use it makes of local indigenous communication process and knowledge.

2.4 Recognizing Traditional Authorities as Indigenous Development Administrators

According to Merle Fainsod (1963:2) Development Administration has involved the establishment of machinery for planning economic growth and mobilizing and allocating resources to expand national income.

Fred Riggs (1971:73) on the other hand differentiates between the administration of development and development of administration. He says development administration, which is administration of development, refers to organized efforts to carry out programs or projects thought by those involved to serve developmental objectives.

Chapel (1982:21) defines development administration as a means to an end in so far as the means can be separated from the end. He says that it is an instrument to implement public policy. Others call it a detailed and systematic execution of public law whose operations are goal oriented and are for the purpose of fulfilling government policies (Timsit 1982:46; Walakira 1982:86). In This sense administrative management of national development is a process of organizing collective efforts to achieve particular objectives as determined by the economic and political system or, more simply, to get things done through national organizations.

Given the above definitions of development administration traditional authorities should qualify as administrators because they are primarily involved in “the execution of public law” even though this law in some instances may not be written and in “organizing collective efforts to achieve particular objectives ”. Ultimately chiefs are part of the “means to an end”.

Few people, however, both practitioners and authors, have tried to see traditional authorities as development administrators. Common among the majority of them is the treatment of Chiefs as having the pull-down effect on development efforts. It is strongly argued here that Traditional Authorities in Malawi must be taken as part of the local government administrative machinery (Rangan and Gilmartin 2002:641-642). The justification for this lies in that it is the unwritten procedure in Malawi that whenever an intervention is being mooted to benefit a particular community the Chief of that community is the gateway into the community (Muva 2002). Echoing Muva, Gomani (Malawi 2003) emphasised that before agreeing to participate in any activity the communities are likely to

ask the development agents whether they have been to the Chief and if the answer is negative the community will be suspicious and unwilling to divulge any information. Here a proposal is made of the tasks of a development administrator, which should include but may not be restricted to; providing leadership, involvement of beneficiaries in the initiation and implementation of community development activities, participating in the activities, nurturing and strengthening existing participatory capacities and observing what is working, can work and cannot work in the community.

If development administration is looked at from this perspective, traditional authorities can then be seen as the more effective participatory development administrators. Perhaps those who doubt the importance of chiefs may be forgiven if the calibre of existing Chiefs in Malawi is scrutinised because it will reveal very low education levels and a cultural stubbornness that do not respect the virtues of human rights and democracy. To exonerate the Chiefs however, and at the risk of sounding contradictory, the latter can be attributed to the lack over the years of a deliberate education policy targeted at chiefs. Further, this also tells on the treatment of traditional authorities over the years as people living at the margins of development trends. Increased knowledge therefore, increases the role and effectiveness of chiefs (Tayanjah Phiri 2003:3).

2.5 Importance of Indigenous Communication Process in Participatory Development

2.5.1 Defining Indigenous Communication

Taking its basic connotation, communication in this context is taken to mean the sharing of information between an individual and another individual or group (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997:3, Mundy and Compton 1995:112). Central in this definition is the implication of a two-way

exchange process that will contribute to the generation of knowledge leading to development. This definition implies that indigenous communication is the locally-evolved elaborate ways for transmitting information. Such indigenous communication includes the transmission of not only technical information, but also all other messages: entertainment, news, persuasion announcements and social exchanges of every type (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997:3).

Communication may occur without any conscious or deliberate attempt by an information sender. Observers may infer much from others' actions, dress and body language. Much childhood learning consists of imitation. Animals, plants and inanimate objects such as stars and clouds convey much information to those able to interpret it (Mundy and Compton 1995:112). The receiver must similarly decode the incoming information and match it with existing knowledge about anything. The implication of this is that rural people may interpret the same information stimuli in different ways (Wang 1982:3). But where indigenous communication is concerned it is absolutely essential that the appropriate interpretation is made for the information to be useful in terms of local development. The centrality of chiefs both as interpreters and as indigenous media deserves further exploration.

2.5.2 Indigenous and exogenous communication compared

Communication channels can be divided into exogenous and indigenous (Wang and Disanayake 1984:22). In Africa, exogenous channels such as television, radio and newspapers have limited range as they are largely confined to urban areas and fail to reach many rural people. Indigenous channels, by contrast, are prolific and are needed to convey messages to people out of the reach of exogenous channels (Mundy et al 1995:114). As

stated above indigenous communication channels have high credibility because they are familiar and controlled locally. It is a universal fact that audiences often greet with scepticism or hostility messages transmitted through the externally controlled mass media.

It is convenient to contrast indigenous communication channels and exogenous channels: mass media (radio, television, newspapers and magazines) and such bureaucratically organised networks as firms, schools, banks, postal and telephone services, agricultural extension and other government agencies.

In general, indigenous communication systems have three features: they have developed locally, are under local control and use low levels of technology (Warren 1964). Many indigenous communication systems share a fourth characteristic: a lack of bureaucratic organisation. However, some systems we might regard as indigenous (mosque, churches) are organised bureaucratically, while some exogenous forms (computer bulletin boards, small-circulation newspapers) are not. Despite these exceptions, exogenous systems can be described as 'institutionally organised communication'. (Mundy et al 1995:114).

However there is sometimes no sharp line between indigenous and exogenous communication. The two systems sometimes overlap in all four elements of the SMCR model of communication: source, message, channel and receiver (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997:49). While the two systems are distinguishable primarily by the channels used (radio, TV, and the printed word versus informal face-to-face communication and folk media), exogenous communication also makes ample use of interpersonal communication as in extension activities and telephones.

The sources often are different. Exogenous communication is originated by an outside institution such as television or radio station, while indigenous communication derives from the local people. But here too there is an overlap. A television program showing local sources such as puppets have been widely used to convey family planning and other development messages designed by national governments (Mosende 1981:2).

Messages conveyed by the two systems are sometimes similar. For instance, news and entertainment may indeed travel through either network. However, most indigenous information flows through indigenous channels, while exogenous channels typically carry exogenous information (Warren 1964:10). This means that indigenous messages, through the channels' typically smaller, more intimate audiences, are more easily tailored to local conditions than is possible in mass exogenous channels.

The receivers of both communication systems also coincide, though the mass media forms of exogenous communication typically reach a much larger audience than do indigenous channels. While television and newspapers have limited ranges, radios are common even in remote areas (Rupa 1985:25). And even the most highly educated urbanite still relies on indigenous communication for much information.

2.5.3 Identifying indigenous communication channels

It is essential that development agents know what the indigenous communication channels are in the area they are working. However, we will deal in this section with the broad categories of indigenous communication channels according to various authors. Mundy et al (1995:143-146) divide indigenous communication channels into six (6)

types: folk media, indigenous organisations, deliberate instruction, records, unorganised channels and direct observation.

Folk media is a broad range of art forms used primarily for entertainment, but is also used to promote education, values and cultural continuity. Types of folk media include festivals, plays and puppet shows, dance, song, storytelling, poetry and debates (Mundy et al 1995:144, Geertz 1980:179, Rupa 1985:30).

Indigenous organisations and forms of social gatherings include religious groups, village meetings, irrigation associations, mothers' clubs and loan associations. These organisations orchestrate much communication through formal meetings of members, by messages sent about activities and obligations and through work activities (Mundy et al 1995:144).

As Warren states (1964:22), deliberate instruction accounts for a large part of the African enculturation process and certainly Malawi is no exception. This is 'an institutionalised act or set of acts performed by an individual to modify the behaviour of another individual and include habit formation' (Warren 1964:3-4). It includes child-rearing practices such as feeding, sphincter control and weaning, training during childhood and adolescence, as well as traditional (often religious) schools, and the instruction given by parents and other older people as a child works and plays in the fields or at home. It continues during adolescence and adulthood through initiation rites and other rites of passage, apprenticeship arrangements and the instructions given by indigenous authorities.

Records can be written, carved, painted or memorised and still provide another way of communicating indigenous information. African storytellers

narrate memorised historical epics and genealogies at length. Proverbs and folklore are other vehicles for transmitting cultural information (Geertz 1980:179, Mundy et al 1995:116).

Mundy et al (1995:116) also argue that unstructured channels include communication in settings like talk at home or at the well, in the field and on the road, in teahouse and coffee shop, in the chief's house and at the market, and wherever else people meet and talk. This communication is not organised or orchestrated but is spontaneous and informal. Communication among peer groups forms a large part of it.

Direct observation entails that communication does not have to be internal to take place. A farmer may see another's bumper crop and infer that the variety of crop used is good (Geertz 1980:180).

Indigenous communication has value in its own right as well as to development efforts in several aspects. It is an important aspect of culture and is the means by which a culture is preserved, handed down, responds to new situations and adapts (Howes 1979:23; Wang 1982:3). The erosion of indigenous communication systems by exogenous education and media endangers the survival of indigenous knowledge (Howes 1979:23).

Indigenous channels are important conduits of change. Because of the above factors research on the diffusion of innovations has shown the importance of informal, interpersonal contacts in persuading people to adopt, or reject innovations, such contacts are often made through indigenous channels (Gomani 2003).

Agreeing with Howes (1979:23), development programmes can use

indigenous communication for both information collection and dissemination. Outsiders can tap indigenous channels for information about the local situation and responses to outside initiatives. Much can be gained by going through the chief to attend the local village gatherings. It is here that opinion leaders and possessors of indigenous knowledge can be identified. But one cannot attend such gatherings without the authority or invitation of the chief.

Many projects rely on information diffusion processes to carry innovations and development messages to their intended beneficiaries. Some projects target opinion leaders and people likely to be innovators in the expectation that indigenous communication channels such as folk media and village organisations (Cowley 1989:30, Lancing 1987:42) will diffuse the message to the rest of the community.

Indigenous channels offer opportunities for participation by local people in different development efforts. They allow local people to communicate among themselves and with development professionals and decision makers (Kolawole 2001:3, McCorkle 1994:39). Local people can retain control over indigenous communication channel more easily than other technologically intensive media.

Lets now turn to the role of Chiefs as actors whose local legitimacy can speed up the indigenous communication process especially towards adoption of new innovations and attitudes.

2.5.4 Chiefs as main actors in indigenous communication process

Decision leaders, comprising of Chiefs, Queen-mothers, Chiefs Councils and elders, constitute the main sources of the messages in indigenous

communication systems. Although their roles and titles are ascribed, they play the very crucial communication role of message originators, either by themselves or in a subordinate capacity through which directives are channelled from central government or development partners to the community (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997:48). Further, Malawi Chiefs are a link to other message sources and indigenous communication media such as opinion leaders who include teachers, artisans, parents and peers due to the consultation that takes place between them and the chiefs as part of the structural arrangements in the African society (Ugboajah 1985b:110).

In Malawi, like in most African countries, indigenous communication systems are orally based and interpersonal face-to-face interaction. They virtually combine vertical top-down flow and bottom-up flow as well as horizontal flow of messages. By being two-way and dialogical they further facilitate participatory consensus building. For instance in court situation questions are permitted before the Chief is the last to speak (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997:49). To assure credibility and instantaneous verification of facts an audience of two or more is often involved in ordinary communication situations and feedback is encouraged and made possible through questions, queries, contributions and comments (Chief Malili:2002).

2.6 Role of Chiefs in Indigenous Knowledge Promotion

Having noted the central role of Chiefs in indigenous communication it goes without saying that they are equally central in promoting indigenous knowledge. The majority of the information that flows through indigenous communication system concerns indigenous knowledge being passed on from generation to generation. But what is indigenous knowledge?

Indigenous knowledge is basically local knowledge that is unique to a given culture (Kolawole 2001:1). The term local or indigenous knowledge is used to distinguish the knowledge developed by a given community from international knowledge systems or scientific knowledge (Kolawole 2001:1, Wang 1982:3). It is information base for a society which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems. Indigenous knowledge systems include those defining the social, natural and physical environments, as well as cognitive and ideational systems (Liebenstein 2001:2). Indigenous knowledge systems form the basis of indigenous decision-making, which is operationalised through indigenous organisations. They provide the foundation for indigenous innovations and experimentation.

Indigenous knowledge is a valuable national resource. It exists and can be a source of pride and ownership in development. It is also a useful tool. It encourages participatory decision-making and effective functioning of local organisation. Indigenous knowledge is a practical concept, which can be used to facilitate communication among people coming from different backgrounds such as researchers, extension workers and beneficiaries (Kolawole 2001:2; Liebenstein 2001:3). Familiarity with indigenous knowledge helps development agents, as Rischkowsky (2001:2) found out in her study of communal rangelands of Namibia, by facilitating participatory approaches to decision-making. To acquire such familiarity time is required for change agents to work with Chiefs who, at least in Malawi, by the structure of village organisation, are kept informed about who is an authority in a specific field of knowledge (Malili:2003). This helps to ensure that end-users of specific development projects are involved

in developing technologies appropriate to their needs (Roth 2001:2). By working with and through existing systems, in which Chiefs are a major player, change agents can facilitate the transfer of technology generated through the international research network in order to improve local systems (Liebenstein 2001:1). Indigenous knowledge is cost effective since it builds on other development efforts aimed at sustainability and capacity-building. However, sadly, little use of indigenous knowledge has been made over the years due to the marginalisation of the major indigenous players, which include Chiefs (Roth 2001:1).

Development agencies have too often neglected the use of indigenous knowledge in designing their development paradigms. It is not uncommon for them to brush aside the people's indigenous knowledge systems and folk beliefs as mere 'superstition', 'backward ideas' and 'pagan practice' (Warren 1995:479). Instead, there is tendency to rely solely on modern technological innovations.

While there is no doubt that modern science is responsible for the unprecedented development that has taken place particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one can site the problems brought about by ecological damage, the high cost of modern technology, the problem of project sustainability and the over-dependence on certain product inputs. As noted by Roth (2001:3) "these effects, plus mounting pressure on the environment from pollution, population increases and shifting weather patterns" have motivated some agencies to press for a reassessment of the present-day development strategies (UNESCO 2000:31).

This rethinking has now brought about renewed interest on indigenous knowledge. Recent studies on ethno-science have dismissed as unfounded

the allegation that indigenous knowledge is irrational (Liebenstein 2001:1). Techno-economic innovations based on indigenous knowledge have been tested through time. In Liebenstein's words, "indigenous knowledge is a science that is user-driven, and its utilization with development efforts could provide long-term advantage that would complement and enhance the contribution of modern-day innovations"(Liebenstein 2001:3).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the trends in development thinking over the past four decades and to establish the link between participatory development and chiefs. It has noted that development has been defined in various ways depending on the thinking of the particular time ranging from economic focus in the 1960s and 70s, to human, environmental, social and currently participatory focus over the successive decades. This chapter has further presented various authors' understanding of participatory development administration and the role of chiefs. The chapter has presented a viewpoint derived from the consolidation of the arguments of the preceding literature, that chiefs deserve to be considered as indigenous development administrators because they are involved the execution of public law and organising collective efforts in the achievement of particular objective as determined by the economic and political process. Finally, it has argued that chiefs are major actors in the indigenous communication process and the promotion of indigenous knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

CULTURE AND CHIEFS AS FACTORS OF DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

Scientists from the fields of Anthropology and Sociology have been studying culture for many years. Still they are quick to note that culture is an abstract and complex concept; thus, many definitions of culture exist (Alexander and Kumaran 1992:11). According to UNESCO (2000:32) most definitions of culture, however, contain some common elements. Most definitions note that culture exists at two levels; the observable (tangible) traces or indicators of the culture and the unobservable (intangible) forces present in the society or organization or whatever the entity might be.

Tylor's definition dwells on the observable traces which include physical characteristics of the entity such as architecture, artwork, dress patterns, language, stories, myths, behavior, formal rules, rituals, ceremonies, and appearance (Alexander and Kumaran 1992:11). But these physical traces

are not the culture itself. Kroeber and Klukhohn (1984:198) argue that these are indicators of the unobservable characteristics of culture – the norms, beliefs, assumptions, ideology, values and shared perceptions held by members of the society (Alexander and Kumaran 1992:11-12). It is the ‘patterns or configurations of these interpretations’ of the observable characteristics that make up the culture, the taken-for-granted and shared meanings, beliefs, and assumptions that people in the society or organization use to cope with problems, adapt to external conditions, and develop internal integration (UNESCO 1995:91). Thus, culture is a force that orients and directs the behaviour of individual social members so that there is consistency and predictability within the organization or society.

The aim of this chapter is to argue for the increasing centrality of culture in development paradigms and in turn the centrality of chiefs in grassroots development participation. Its objectives are to:

- (i) examine the meaning of culture
- (ii) examine characteristics of chiefs that make them a central cultural factor
- (iii) examine how culture are formed and how this process has a bearing on development and development administration
- (iv) examine how culture can be influenced or changed to orient it towards a sustainable development strategy.

3.2 The Meaning of Culture

Perceptions about the meaning of culture have changed over time. In the 19th century original thinkers represented by Tylor (Alexander and Kumaran 1992:15) saw culture as a ‘complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’. Due to the confusion that

this definition brought to subsequent thinkers, that of trying to bring together under the word ‘culture’ both historical objectives and internal properties of ‘man’ diverse variations of this definition have emerged over the next century.

Bodley (Bodley 1994:1) attributes modern technical definition of culture to ‘the socially patterned human thought and behaviour’ as deriving from Tylor’s definition. In the various attempts to simplify the matter researchers have created lists purporting to represent the content of culture as a guide to further research.

To illustrate the diversity of the interpretation of the word culture Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Klukhohn published in 1952 a list of 160 different definitions of culture broadly categorized as topical, historical, behavioral, normative, functional, mental, structural and symbolic. The specific culture concept that one works with is an important matter relevant here because it influences the problem being investigated, the method, interpretation and position taken on the issue as well as general development policy issues (Bodley 1994:2; Varenne 2004:2; Alexander and Kumaran 1992:13).

For purposes of guiding the discussion on the argument that traditional authorities are an essential cultural factor the most relevant of Kroeber and Klukhohn’s definitions of culture are summarized here:

Table 1: Summary of Kroeber and Klukholm’s Definitions of Culture

Source: John H Bodley 'Learning Commons – What is culture? - Definitions' *Cultural Anthropology: Tribes, States and the Global System*, 1994

From the above definitions by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (Bodley 1994:5), several, albeit contradicting factors emerge. For instance, it can be deduced from these definitions that culture involves at least three components: what people think, what they do and the material products they produce (Giger and Davidhizar 2004:186; Leininger 2004:1). Thus mental processes; beliefs, knowledge and values are parts of culture.

Secondly, the shared aspect of culture means that it is a social phenomenon. That is culture is learned, not biologically inherited, and involves arbitrarily assigned meanings (Boyle and Andrews 2004:1; Geissler 2004:1).

Finally, as Lipson (1996:31) argues the cross-generational aspect of culture leads to treating culture as a super organic entity, existing beyond its individual human carriers. Individuals are born into and are shaped by a preexisting culture that continues to exist after they die.

Other researchers criticize the super organic interpretation of culture saying that it is dehumanizing denial of 'free will', the human ability to create and change culture (Geertz 1973:12-13; Williams 1981:210; Shweder 1991:101). They argue that culture is an abstraction, not a real entity.

However, treating culture as an abstraction may lead one to deny the basic human rights of small-scale societies and ethnic minorities to maintain their cultural heritage in the face of threats from dominant societies. It is safe to argue here that culture is an objective reality.

Traditional Authorities in Malawi are a social institution as real as any other institution existing in Malawi that reflects the national culture. Even constitutions and policy documents can be thought of as a reflection or product of our national cultures because the basic values and beliefs that underlie most governments are contained in them (UNESCO 2000:40). Such institutions and documents are in essence supposed to be one indicator of culture.

In spite of the theory, in the practice of most industrial countries culture is often used in a restricted sense to refer to certain class of objects and activities, which are defined by their lack of utilitarian justification and their exclusive purpose of providing pleasure. Grand opera, rock concerts and rugby or soccer songs are all examples of this sort of culture (UNESCO 2000:33). But for our purposes, the word 'culture' is here used in a much broader, anthropological sense. It is not limited to a particular set of activities connected with heritage and the arts, but encompasses all those activities, which define the identity of a particular human society or group (UNESCO 1995:36-37). As the preamble to the 1997 Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies puts it:

'In its broadest sense, culture today can be viewed as a set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional characteristics which define a society or social group. In addition to the arts and letters, it encompasses ways of life, the fundamental rights of the person, value

systems, traditions and beliefs'. (UNESCO, 2000:39)

This definition may appear very general or even vague. But it is in fact rigorous and precise enough to account for the phenomenon of culture as it is experienced in the context of development and to provide the grounds for a productive analysis, which may open up research into the ways and means of interaction between culture and development. It encompasses two essential points:

- a. Culture is not the possession or accomplishment of an individual, but defines a way of being together with others; it is essentially social.
- b. Culture is not made up of a fixed range of activities, but consists of all those activities through which a society defines and identifies itself. Any activity can, at some time, be cultural; any activity has a cultural dimension; culture is not an exclusive category, but exists as perspective in which an activity is seen and valued as the creative energy in every society and in each of its members. Culture, therefore, is the background and/or context within which all activities take place.

A cultural approach to decentralization will, therefore, be the one in which all the activities which constitute the life of a society are respected, not merely for what they are in themselves, but for the contribution they make to expressing and reflecting on that society's identity. Culture is where a society meets in order to think about itself and determine collectively what sort of society it is and wants to be (UNESCO 1995:165; Tomlinson 1997:21).

The aim of decentralized development (development based on a system of decentralization) is to empower all communities so as to enable them to

achieve full capacity for independent development. In order to do so development must begin by recognizing and valuing the one intrinsic asset, which communities can possess, and without which they would cease to exist in their own eyes (Tomlinson 1997:23; Samover and Porter 1994:11). This asset is their culture. This fundamental imperative remain true even if a set of shared values has been agreed upon through the United Nations system as high-level and long-term objectives for all countries and peoples.

Thus acknowledging cultural imperatives does not require that one abandon one's capacity for critical judgment. It simply requires one to recognize the undoubted truth, that no culture is without value in itself. That value may be the minimal one of enabling the members of a given 'society' to remain alive, by defining for them the minimum sense of self-respect that makes life worth living (Southern Illinois University 2004:1). Many of the cultures and subcultures of groups who live in a state of permanent marginalisation and crisis may be of this sort. Drug users, the homeless, those forced into prostitution or slavery, the extremely poor in all societies- all these groups, whom we may tend to think of as possessing literally nothing, have their own cultures, which prevent them from sliding definitely towards self destruction. They motivate them to protect themselves against an inherently hostile environment (Arizpe 1996:4).

These cultures may seem paltry things compared to the great civilizations of history, yet for the anthropologist they are part of the same family. They enable a way of life to survive, even if it is not a way of life others might envy. It is only if one can recognize the value of such cultures to their members, and how threatened they may feel if asked abruptly to alter them or to give them up, that one will be able to help them in moving beyond mere survival to define their own development (Atal 1991:6; Benham

1998:13).

International documents talk about the idea of a diversity of cultures, and in practice even well-intentioned economists should see the ideal as integrating cultural values into their own growth paradigm or putting both technology and economics at the service of the cultural values and goals of local people. This brings us to the issue of the prerequisites of the cultural approach to development.

3.3 Cultural Factors as Prerequisites

Development programmes and projects must take into account a number of cultural factors and cultural diversity should be borne in mind. Geissler (1993:10), Lipson (1996:15) and Shweder (1991:5) each argue that every human group has its own values, standards, behavioral, economic social and family models, relations with the world, knowledge or nationality, skills and know-how. It should not be assumed that spiritual and ethical values are similar across all societies, even if there are some shared values.

Some prerequisite cultural factors that should be taken into account include local ways of thinking, emotional aspects, spiritual factors, specific local concerns and underlying conflicts as well as local and non-local cultural players which include the traditional authorities, village elders and authority figures (UNESCO 1995:162; Claxton 1994:2).

Within the framework of the Lome Convention (a wide ranging agreement between the European Community and the sixty-nine countries of Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), and in the light of its experiences under this Convention, the European Commission has developed a criteria matrix and aide-memoire to help adapt aid to the specificities of different geographical and cultural areas within the Convention's beneficiary

countries (UNESCO 1995:170; Claxton 1994:2). It arranges the criteria into four groups namely social organization family organization, economic organization and cultural factors. However, some of the criteria that it identifies under the headings of social organization, family organization and economic organization are clearly cultural in nature. The matrix is summarized bellow citing only the purely cultural criteria under each group heading.

Table 2: European Commission’s Cultural Criteria Matrix for Aid to ACP Countries:

Social Organization

1. Structuring by ethnic, age, religious and linguistic groupings
2. The status of and relationships among groups and hierarchies (by age, sex, lineage, property etc)
3. Social prestige and value criteria

Family Organization

1. Interpersonal relationships, authority and subordination relationships, distribution of power within the family (budget, decision-making etc)

Cultural Organization

1. Professional and general knowledge
2. Beliefs, customs, value systems
3. Taboos, (related to food, resources, interpersonal relationships)
4. Attitudes towards modernization, attachment to traditional know-how
5. Typical behaviour (e.g use of leisure time, hospitality, aspirations)
6. Relationship to authorities (central or regional) and institutions
7. Self development efforts: collegiate organizations’ (e.g village committees) collective endeavours. Possibilities in this regard, in particular innovation processes: initiative (individual or collective, private or public), obstacles (such as social inequality) and dissemination.

Economic Organization

1. Forms of ownership, transmission and inheritance of land, personal property etc.

is distributed and contested in the community. The saying that chiefs are custodians of culture is true and ripe in Malawi as in most African countries and ignoring it can be suicidal to development efforts (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997:28; World Bank 1992:17; Gomani 2003).

In the rural communities such as Traditional Authority Malili in Malawi, the survival of the group has always been and still is the best policy, even the only policy to choose from, to ensure the survival of the individual. The individual who is able to put him or herself first, before the interests of his or her community, is for the most societies a comparatively recent historical invention and at best only an intermittent and partial reality for the city people even today. The chief being the main source of the bond that keeps this tradition alive, they have legitimate authority over their subjects (Ray 1996:125).

What Donald I. Ray states about Ghana is also true about Malawi; “...traditional authorities draw their legitimacy from roots other than those of the Ghanaian state (and the colonial state). Chiefs’ legitimacy comes mainly from the sacred and political order that existed before the imposition of the colonial state” (Ray 1996:127). Chiefs or traditional authorities may have been modified to greater or lesser extents by the colonial and post colonial states, but traditional authority’s legitimacy pre-dates the latter two state forms.”

3.5 Impact of Culture on Development

Culture is not static. Organisational, social or community cultures emerge and change as the organization, society or community itself change.

When he expounded on the formation of organizational culture Edgar Schein maintained that people form groups seeking to find ways in which they can achieve what they want and in the process they bring goals, values and even hopes to the group process. (Schein 1992:12)

Schein's argument also applies to development and development administration of less powerful countries. Economically, foreign ideas and values come to these countries in form of conditionality and expatriate expertise (World Bank 1996:12; Schein 1993:91). They inadvertently lead to new ways of doing things.

On another note, and equally important is Schein's suggestion that groups progress through a series of stages that affect culture. According to Schein (1985:34-36), the first stage of cultural development revolves around issues of dependency and authority. The question of who will lead the group (or organization) is the focal point. The group looks for someone to give it direction. The type of person who is selected to lead is indicative of many values and norms of the group or organization. Leader characteristics such as age, training, background, gender, and experience may all be important in the formation of group culture.

Historically, chiefs have been recognized as an important influential aspect of community administration in African countries. They have been seen as the most relevant authority commanding considerable legitimacy at the grassroots level. Although over the years the introduction of modern government has tried to overshadow them they remain legitimate and the pillars of African traditional culture (Ray 1996:141; World Bank 1992:21; Colin 1986:97).

However, chiefs in Malawi will now have to confront the new phenomenon of decentralization in which they are required to share roles and responsibilities with local government authorities as an aspect of a democratic system of administration (Crook 2002:17). The way they embrace the new phenomenon will determine whether their authority continues to be considered legitimate and representative of local cultural sensibilities. Depending on how both parties view their roles, the presence of state government authority and traditional authority in proximity can be both a formidable challenge and a complementary advantage to either. Local Government authorities will need the legitimacy of the traditional authorities who in turn will need the Local Government's advantages of greater financial resource mobilization capabilities. If they view each other as antagonistic camps chances are that development projects will suffer the consequences. This brings us to Schein's second historical stage of cultural development.

Schein's second stage of cultural development involves the confrontation of intimacy, role differentiation and peer relationship issues (Schein 1981:141). Successful first efforts to deal with the authority issue are likely to produce a feeling of success and good feelings about membership that are likely to carry over for an extended period of time. Early success can often motivate members to give greater commitment and effort to the organization (Argyris 1985:11; Kotter 1992: 53; Schein 1993:34).

In this stage, creativity and stability issues must be confronted. The group or organization begins to cope with the innovative approaches that brought its initial success as that innovation and creativity come into conflict with the needs for order and stability (Schein 1993:34; Schmid 1992:90; Mueller 1994:410; Munch and Smelser 1992:3-11).

Finally, the organization or group matures only to encounter a confrontation of survival and growth issues. Countries and organizations in Africa, have been stuck at stage three where they are grappling with the New World with its competitive values and ethics.

Christian Scholz views organizational culture as a complex phenomenon and believes that the best way to understand cultural formation is through a typology of past research efforts (Parker 2000:71; Scholz 1987:79-85). He argues that culture develops along three dimensions: an evolutionary dimension, an internal dimension, and an external dimension. These three dimensions make up his typology.

The evolutionary dimension of cultural formation is somewhat similar to Schein's view: culture develops over time in a series of stages (Scholz 1987:79-85). Scholz proposes that a nascent culture is already in place and that subsequent stages are the result of how the organization responds to challenges to the culture. He outlines five evolutionary stages: (1) the stable stage during which no change is contemplated; (2) the reactive stage during which minimal change is accepted; (3) the anticipating stage when incremental changes are accepted; (4) the exploring stage during which large amounts of change are possible; and (5) the creative stage when continuous change is possible. According to Scholz, not all organizations follow this sequence, nor is any one stage regarded as better than another (Schein 1985:191; Varenne 2004:2; Scholz 1985:191).

The focus of the internal dimension of culture is on particular internal conditions operating within the organization or community that affects the culture (Mueller 1994:401-428). For example, an organization that uses

standardized production processes would create conditions for a culture that is constant and process oriented. On the other hand, a professional organization with employees possessing varied skills and high levels of professional expertise is likely to foster development of a culture that emphasizes individualism and professionalism (Alexander and Seidman:1990:95).

External environmental conditions are the forces that constitute the external dimension of culture. External conditions and how organizational members perceive and respond to those conditions play a critical role in the development of the culture (Banai 1982:351-354; Baumgartel 1982:192-196; Ashkanasy 2000:3). A company or community facing a complex and dynamic environment is likely to develop a culture that values flexibility, innovativeness, and risk taking. Conversely an organization or community facing a simple and stable environment is likely to adapt a culture with the features of conservatism, risk aversion, and bureaucracy (Bhagat 1979:381-391; Dorfman 188:135).

Scholz's model of cultural development is therefore, somewhat more complex than Schein's. He views organizational culture as arising from these three diverse sets of pressures: time, internal characteristics of the organization, and external conditions in the environment (Scholz 1987:84).

Charles Fomburn (1983:142) has described the development of culture through forces at three major levels: societal, industrial, and organizational. According to Fomburn's view, organizational cultures are products of the broader culture in which organizations are embedded (Fomburn:142; Louis 1985:73-80). Understanding the interplay between societal and industry levels of culture with characteristics of the organization is vital for an

accurate analysis of culture and for guidance on how to modify culture.

At the societal level culture represents the values, attitudes, and meanings that members bring to the community. Such social forces as the educational system, economic conditions, and the social structure of the larger society may influence this (Louis 1985:87; Djelic 1998:67). These conditions may influence the norms and practices in the community in subtle but real ways. A person's conduct or company's strategies, mission, objectives, norms and practices must be consistent with the community culture if the person or organization wishes to maintain legitimacy and approval.

For example as most of Africa, Malawi is regarded as culturally conservative. Movies, art, exhibitions, and music that raise objection to the age old belief of the supremacy of men over women or indeed that discuss sexual issues related to condom usage openly have for sometime offended local sensibilities (Schein 1994:71; Fomburn 1983:150). The societal level, with chiefs as central players therefore, is often an ethical, legal, and social guide to conducting business and doing development work in a community.

3.6 Considerations of Culture in International Development

Nations and communities tend to exhibit certain characteristics (values, norms, practices, beliefs and standards) that are collectively created over long periods of time. A culture, for example, develops a common language and ways of thinking that consciously and unconsciously direct activities performed by its members.

Geert Hofstede (1980:24) surveyed people from around the world

concerning their work-related values. He found major differences across countries that had a profound impact on the way individuals within a country approach their work lives. For instance, Westerners tend to be much more collective in nature, and group achievement and recognition is a dominant motivator. Even among Western nations there are differences. For example, French workers perceive a large power distance between themselves and their bosses. American workers perceive a more collegial work relationship with bosses, and often view bosses as peers and colleagues (Hofstede 1980:49; Pettigrew 1995:579). In recent years, much discussion has focused on the national and organizational cultural differences that distinguish Japanese and American organization .

To fully understand Japanese management, it is important to understand the national culture in which Japanese firms are embedded. Several important characteristics of Japan and Japanese culture contribute to the unique Japanese management culture. First, history and geography contribute to Japan's emphasis on protecting its borders from foreigners. Japan was essentially closed to foreigners until late in the nineteenth century. This, in turn, has contributed to the homogeneity of the Japanese population and their fear and mistrust of foreigners. Japanese culture is, to a large extent, based on Confucianism and Buddhism (Dorfman 1988:139; Goodstein 1981:49-54).

By contrast, American culture is a product of largely open borders and heterogeneity. The Protestant ethic plays a central role in American culture, but diverse immigrant groups who often brought with them their unique ethnic and national cultures settled in the US. Thus, we often speak of Italian – Americans, German- Americans, Mexican-Americans, Asian-Americans, and African-Americans (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:7;

Humpden-Turner and Trompenaars 1997:149-159). The different national histories and cultural paths of Japan and the US have produced distinct national organizational cultures.

Organisations develop cultures within the context of their national cultures. An organization is, above all, a citizen of a particular country, and the country's dominant norms, standards, styles, and beliefs set the parameters in which organizations can develop cultures that are congruent with societal cultures (Hickson and Pugh 1995:61; Hofstede 1980a:53).

Culture is said to be thick if it is widespread and accepted throughout the social organization and members subscribe to a shared set of beliefs, values, and norms (Hofstede 1980b:50; 1999:34-43; Jelinek, Smircich and Hirsch 1983:331-338). A thin culture is one that is not widely held and does not enjoy acceptance throughout the social organization. The social organization lacks a core of commonly held beliefs, norms and values (Hofstede 2000:165-173; Hollan 1992: 291).

In Malawi, the culture of traditional authorities can be safely be regarded as thick. Proposing the abolition of chiefs is a feat that the Government of Malawi would not dare to propose because apart from leaving an authority vacuum it will offend age-old beliefs and will be seen as invoking ancestral wrath.

3.7 Effects of Culture on Administration

Culture can affect administration of organization and community programmes and projects in five specific aspects: direction, pervasiveness, strength, flexibility, and commitment (Joynt and Warner 1996; Korman

1985:243-244).

Direction refers to the way culture affects goal attainment. Culture can help push an institution toward national goals or away from them. It can either be consistent with national goals (a positive force) or it can be inconsistent with the goals (a negative force). For example, if a nation's culture fosters a "not-invented-here" attitude toward innovation, national institutions will be reluctant to go outside national boundaries for innovations (Lowe 1981:312; Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley and Janssens 1995:167). This attitude breeds a belief that any innovation not invented or developed inside the country cannot be any good. Such a culture may be an important factor in directing the country's social institutions and organizations, be they public or private, to maintain active research and development divisions, but it also directs them away from potentially valuable outside innovations (Lytle et al 1995:168; Mueller 1994:422). These social institutions and organizations may periodically reinvent the wheel; that is, they may spend valuable time and resources developing innovations that are already available outside them.

The degree to which members share a culture is an indication of its pervasiveness. Widespread adoption of the basic culture is key to a thick culture, while thin cultures are not pervasive (Parker 2000:18; Robinson and Hofstede 1993:110-115).

Strength of culture refers to its impact on members. Some religious sects and political organizations have what amounts to a compelling force over their members. Take the case of the Burundian religious sect that commanded followers to commit mass suicide inside a church (Tembo 2001:3; BBC 5/05/2002). This is an example of the strength of a cultural

cum religious belief resulting into negative consequences.

Flexible cultures are adaptable to changing conditions (Schmid 1992:88-120; Steinmetz 1999:25). Evidence of flexibility (or inflexibility) can be seen in how organizations respond in times of crisis. Several techniques can be used to establish flexibility for instance in the local government institutions and project offices for effective implementation of projects that recognize local cultural issues.

One method, which may be unpopular for government institutions but may work well in grassroots project offices and organisations, is to establish a senior management position that is responsible for questioning proposed actions and questioning the status quo in general (Strange 1996:57). This person should have considerable experience with the organization so that he or she has legitimacy in the organization and can see situations from a totally organizational perspective.

A second strategy is to recruit outsiders to fill positions on governing boards and management. Outsiders can bring fresh perspective to organizational problems and can help the organization avoid some bad syndrome (Chapel 1982:22-25; Waldo 1969:294-295). One cautionary note related to the recruitment of outsiders for executive positions is that it may lower morale in the organization and some managers may feel that they have been passed over.

Finally, flexibility can be enhanced throughout the organization by cross training and frequent job reassignments. Flexibility is an important factor in the integration of culture into the development strategy (Ashkamasy, Widerom and Peterson 2000:15).

The culture of an organization and a social grouping also has impact on the degree of commitment shown by its members. Commitment is a condition in which members of a group give their efforts, abilities, and loyalties to the organization or group and its pursuit of its goals in return for satisfaction (Archer 1989:38 ; Cray and Mallory 1998:16). In other words, the culture creates conditions in the organization whereby members are either willing or not willing to commit themselves to the pursuit of that mission. Culture may also aid by spelling out to the member the value of the organization to the individual. Commitment is a type of emotional (and financial) investment in the social organization.

It is essential, therefore, to analyze the Malawian cultural factors, of which traditional authorities should top the list, in order to evaluate its effects on development through a cultural audit.

3.8 Auditing Culture for Development in Malawi

Just as companies conduct financial and managerial audits, it is necessary to put culture under the microscope. The purpose of such investigation is to ensure that the social culture fits with its other characteristics i.e. goals, people, processes (in a nutshell – characteristics conducive to national development).

3.8.1 The informal culture audit

Conflict among different subcultures within a social organization may also call attention of members to the culture of the organization and community. Value and norm differences may affect such seemingly trivial things as

dress or such important issues as national or community priorities (Crane 1994:29; Hofstede 1981:63-68).

How top administrators behave also causes members to monitor culture. What top executives or chiefs say and do goes far to show the organization's or community's culture.

A culture audit, then, is a look at values, beliefs, norms, behaviors, and other aspects of culture (Lowe and Oswick 1996:33; Rossi 1989:13; Smircich 1983:339-358). It consists of monitoring, evaluating, and perhaps changing various components of culture. Audits show the extent to which both the formal and informal rules of the community operate. Culture audits can be conducted by coming up with questions aimed at finding out how members feel and think about the institution and policies, norms and behaviors of its members.

3.8.2 The formal cultural audit

If the administration is contemplating changing the culture the simple observational process of an informal audit is not likely to be rigorous enough. The administration should turn to a formal culture audit to gain a comprehensive picture of the culture (Tayeb 1994:429-432; Swidler 1986:273-286; Triandis 1993:132-134). Community leaders and administrators may themselves attempt to assess the culture through structured observations and data collection. After all, they are likely to have access to more data about their institution than outsiders. However, insiders may be too close to the culture of their institutions to accurately and objectively assess that culture. Thus organizations often turn to outside consultants to work with insiders in conducting an audit (Argyris 1985:18-

23; Kotter and Heskett 1992:5).

3.9 Traditional Authorities as a Tool for Change

Even without the conscious effort to change them after an audit, national cultures are by nature dynamic. That is, they naturally change and evolve in response to changes in the environment. Z Kbotokuma thinks that every culture has a dual tendency towards stability and towards change (Schein 1999:125-130; Mcsweeney 2002:89-118). He identifies four ways in which cultural change comes: by substitution of traditional elements with modern elements; disappearance of the traditional model without replacing it; enlargement by introducing additional elements; and by fusion through amalgamation of innovations with traditional models (Sondergaard 1994:453; Jelinek et al 1983:20; Spender 1998:32; Mcsweeney 2004:9). However, culture change focuses on planned change of a more substantial and extensive nature. Administration includes the idea that administrators can change a culture, or parts of a culture, to be more consistent with the institution's or Government's strategic objectives. Administrators including chiefs can use two basic approaches to the task of culture change: top-down change and bottom-up change (UNESCO 2000:63; Davis 1984:287).

In top-down change, the top administration plays the lead role in changing the culture. An example of top-down change is the introduction of local governments through decentralization. The culture may be changed by "decrees" that different norms of behaviour are to be observed. The major advantage of top-down change is that it can be implemented quickly (Davis 1984:287; Bartoli 1999:42). One particular strategy that is often used to bring about top-down change is through a change in the leadership and top administration team for instance through presidential appointments of

chiefs instead of the traditional hereditary system. Bringing in new leaders often involves an implicit attempt to change the culture. One problem with top-down culture change, however, is that the changes may not be consistent with the values and norms of lower-level members of the community. This may produce changes that are not long lasting (UNESCO 2000:63).

With bottom-up or participative approaches to change, community members are involved in the change process. This type of change may be slower, but it is likely to be longer lasting because practitioners of particular cultural traits are involved with and committed to the change (Bartoli 1999:44).

3.10 Conclusion

Culture is both an input that guides the country's development strategy formulation and implementation process and is also part of the output. Culture provides guidelines for strategy formulation and implementation, and culture provides a context for the organization to pursue the strategy.

We have seen in this chapter that although perceptions about culture have changed over time and several definitions exist, two essential points to this discussion emerge; culture is social and it provides the context within which every activity takes place. It argues that traditional authorities are a cultural factor and should be treated as a prerequisite for the success of development efforts in Malawi based on a cultural approach. For this reason chiefs should be treated as influential elements of community administration and that the advent of decentralization should not allow competition between chiefs and local government authorities. They must complement each other by working closely together in development work.

Further, the chapter has also tried to explain how culture is formed and discusses several view points as given by a variety of authors with the conclusion that for every organization or person to have identity, legitimacy and to maintain approval they must behave consistent with the community or national culture. Nations have distinct cultures, which have influenced the way day to day business is conducted which ultimately have influenced the direction of national development. Hence it has influence on the degree of commitment that members have to a community or organization.

Finally the chapter has examined how culture can be audited to fit with the goals, people and processes for development and how it can be changed through top-down and bottom-up strategies. It argues in this context that the bottom-up strategy is participatory involving the grassroots and therefore more preferable than the top-down strategy

CHAPTER 4
**IMPORTANCE OF DECENTRALISATION IN INCLUSIVE DECISION
MAKING**

4.1 Introduction

The allocation and use of resources in a government system is crucial to the implementation of national poverty reduction objectives because it determines whether a government will in practice achieve these objectives, particularly in the area of more effective and efficient service delivery (Farant and Clarke 2002:1). Analysing the political and administrative dimensions of decentralisation in Malawi should help answer how pro-poor progress can be maintained.

Political decentralisation refers to the downward transfer of autonomous decision-making powers to lower local governments allowing them greater discretion in resource allocation and programmes design (Munyonyo 1999:2-3; Kisubi 1996:88-89).

Administrative decentralization on the other hand refers to where officials are appointed by the central government and posted to the districts to act as central government representatives (Nsibambi 1992:166; Wallis 1998:122). Administrative decentralisation is therefore, in essence more of an extension of central control over the periphery than the granting of autonomy to local institutions and administrators.

Apart from the resource management, budgetary and fiscal dimensions of decentralisation which include areas of technical expertise such as intergovernmental fiscal transfers, planning budgeting and performance monitoring processes and capacity and revenue mobilization the involvement of traditional authorities as the leading local leaders in the overall management of the districts will have important implications for the pro-poor services on the ground (Wallis 1998: 122).

Such institutional arrangements will shape local governments incentives and capacity in delivering services to the poor and will reflect the democratic, participatory political reasoning behind the reform and significantly determine the type of accountability mechanism to which local governments must adhere, both to central government and to their constituents.

This chapter will therefore aim mainly to examine the theoretical understanding of decentralisation vis-à-vis the role of traditional authorities and how it helps in inclusive decision-making. Its specific objectives are to:

- 5 Discuss the essential characteristics of inclusive decision making processes,
- 6 Define decentralisation,

- 7 Relate decentralisation to the New Public Management concept,
- 8 Examine essential factors and conditions for a successful decentralisation and
- 9 Argue the participation mobilization role of traditional authorities in a decentralised system.

4.2 Essential Characteristics of Inclusive Decision-making

Whenever a public administration has to draw up a plan, or decide on a specific project (a road, a motorway, a railway line, a dam an airport, a shopping centre, a car park, the improvement of a square or neighbourhood, a waste disposal plant, a power line, a telephone line, and many others), it finds itself up against the following problem: who should be involved in making the decision, and how? Is it better for just a few to decide on prevalently technical grounds (with the risk of finding oneself faced with the opposition of those who have been excluded) or is it better to expand the decision-making arena to take in the multiple actors concerned (with the risk of getting into endless discussions and coming up against all kinds of vetoes)?

Several authors have argued that in contemporary democracies, the prevailing tendency is toward this second possibility. More and more forms of consultation, concertation and negotiation with the concerned parties are used; citizens are urged to participate, tables are opened, agreements are reached (Bobbio 2000: 20; Fisher and Ury 1991:35; Forester 1999; 13; Kraybill 2004: 31; Susskind, Mckearnan and Thomas-Larmer 2000: 41;Wates 2000:25). The aim of this section is to examine the characteristics of inclusive decision making and in particular answer the following questions: in what cases is it advisable to use an inclusive decision-making process, when, that is at what stage of the planning process, who should be

the partners in the process, and how should they be identified, with what instruments, which techniques and with what outcomes, that is, what can change after the concertation?

4.2.1 In what cases can inclusive decision-making take place?

Decisions by a few are easier and quicker to make than decisions by many. Widening the decision-making arena obviously creates no end of problems. This option should be limited to absolutely indispensable cases (Bobbio 2000: 21), which however are numerous in rural development process.

According to Bobbio (2000:21) and Forester (1999: 15) a strategy of the inclusive type should be embarked on where there are two essential conditions:

- a) When the project intervention has the potential to result in significant mainly negative external effects. This means that the project has consequences for some social group; first and foremost those who live or work near the project site. Effects must be considered disagreeable when those concerned perceive them as such. But sometimes, even interventions designed to improve conditions for villagers (that is aimed at producing positive external effects) turn out to be misguided and unsuitable, and end up by raising protests. Such negatively perceived externalities should be sizeable, that is, large enough to generate opposition and organised protests, creating serious difficulties for the proponent.
- b) When the technical and scientific analyses are not able to dispel uncertainty as to the extent of such effects. Many technical tools exist for ascertaining the presence of negative effects and correcting them. The environmental impact assessment, now applied to a very wide range of interventions, has exactly this function.

However, as Wates states (2000: 28), technical inquiry into the impacts may not be able to identify and correct all effects effectively perceived by the addressees of the intervention. Technicians have a different knowledge of the territory than the inhabitants (more in depth for certain aspects, more superficial for others) and are led to observe impacts from a different point of view. Little is known about some impacts (the effect of purely scientific phenomena such as electromagnetic fields, for instance) and cannot be understood by rural people but create apprehension just the same (Susskind et al 2000: 41-46, Renn, Webler and Wiedermann 1995: 39-41; Forester 1999: 15-18). The technicians' contribution is indispensable, of course: there are some impacts that rural people are unable to see or tend to underestimate. But it may be insufficient because there are also impacts that technicians are unable to see or tend to underestimate to which the citizens are very sensitive.

When it is judged that both conditions of significant externalities and uncertainty exist consensus must be established. The disadvantages of consensus building include giving too much space to localistic and particularistic positions to the detriment the general interests, excessive increase in the time period of decision-making and increase in the costs of intervention to the point of making the project no longer feasible (Bobbio 2000: 22). Aware of the preceding disadvantages, the following sub-section will examine how it is possible to maximise the positive aspects of consensus building and minimise its negative aspects.

4.2.2 At what stage of planning is inclusive decision process necessary?

Drawing up a plan or a specific land use project for instance is a lengthy procedure. One starts with a strategic idea a few hypotheses for the project intervention are formulated, the project alternatives are examined, a preliminary project is drawn up, the definite project follows, the construction sites are opened. At what stage of this process should consensus building be inserted?

Bobbio (2000:22-24), with reference to the Italian case maintains that the standard answer that is found in all reflections on consensual action is: as early as possible. This applies even to the Malawi case. It is better to open the concertation on the preliminary project than on the definite project. It's better to open the concertation on the project hypotheses or the project idea than on the preliminary project.

The reason is very simple: the longer the planning has gone ahead, the less it can be corrected. At each stage, possible alternatives are eliminated and specific paths are taken. Turning back is nearly always impossible (also because planning is a costly activity). What the promoter must primarily avoid is falling into what Susskind and Cruikshank (1987: 10-14) call the "DAD syndrome" (decide, announce and defend) on the basis of which first one decides, then the decision is announced to the public and in the end one is forced to defend the chosen solution tooth and nail without any longer being able to improve it.

But there is another reason to recommend early concertation. It is important to put interested citizens face to face with the problem rather than a specific solution (Wates 2000: 24-27; Renn, Webler and Wiedemann 1995: 44). This is exactly the opposite of what usually happens. Nowadays citizens tend to react negatively when a solution is proposed to them as the only one

possible, with the result that they are freed of all responsibility in relation to the problem (which nevertheless concerns them). Early start up of the process is an incentive to take responsibility, to realise that the problem exists and that a solution has to be found. It also requires a willingness, on the part of public administrations or proponents, to redefine the original problem and to allow different solutions from those initially foreseen to emerge in the course of the dialogue process.

Starting concertation “as early as possible” is hardly the current practice of administration and planners in Malawi. Planners (and their commissioning bodies) are used to thinking of planning as a self-sufficient process, which does not admit of interference by the layman. And they are especially convinced of the necessity of presenting the public with a solid, complete, technically irreprehensible project. They need to realise, however, that the investments made in planning end up producing excessive rigidity that can prove fatal in the case of contestation (Wates 2000:29). As Bobbio (2004:23) argues, they should also beware of the trap of sunk costs (costs that are already incurred and therefore cannot be cancelled or reversed), that very common phenomenon by which the investments already made in a project induce the proponent to persist in that direction, even if it now seems unfeasible, needlessly incurring further costs.

It is worth stressing the point that the concertation process should begin at an early stage of the planning process, when alternatives are still available.

4.2.3 With whom should concertation be achieved?

The question to be answered in this sub-section is concertation, fine, but with whom? Bibbio (2004:23-25) again argues that the standard answer that we find in all the studies on participation in public choices is: with all the

stakeholders, all those who have a specific interest in what's on the line. Put differently, the golden rule should be: no impact without representation (Renn et al 1995:30). This means that the administration should carefully analyse all the possible impacts (social, economic, environmental and cultural), and identify the factions that might represent them in the course of the process.

This operation is quite a delicate one. The organization of interests is not a certainty: rather, it tends to develop gradually as the affected citizens become aware of the specific nature of the problem on the table (Susskind et al 1987:19). These aggregation processes should be favoured, encouraged.

For various reasons, such encouragement must regard both the interests favourable to the project and the interests contrary to it. In Malawi Chiefs are often viewed by public administrators, albeit erroneously, as factors opposed to development projects. Because some project such as infrastructure projects have the characteristic of producing diffuse benefits and concentrated costs as a result it is likely that the chiefs in whose village the costs fall, have a greater capacity for mobilisation against than in favour of such a project. It is therefore necessary as Wates (2000:31) argues : to encourage the emergence of all possible opponents, since they have the tendency to aggregate late, when the threat has become concrete and to encourage the emergence of all potentially favourable actors who, as recipients of diffuse benefits, would have little incentive to mobilise in favour of the project spontaneously. In addition to their being core elements of the concertation process chiefs would also be central in identifying the most relevant community based stakeholders.

This identification of the possible interlocutors constitutes the first, essential phase of the process of building a consensual decision. It can be achieved through a mix of activities of the cognitive/analytical type (analysis of impacts and stakes) and active intervention on the situation (communication, action research, territorial animation, outreach) Susskind et al 2000:44; Susskind et al 1987:20, Forester 1999: 17). The aim is to bring into focus who the (actual or potential) actors are and to get to know their orientations and preferences. An actor is a party who has a specific interest in the stake (gains to achieve or losses to avoid) and possesses sufficient resources to influence the process. It involves: identification of the stakes, that is, environmental consequences, division of the financial burdens such as the scope of the intervention and the connection with other interventions to which different actors are sensitive because they involve impacts of different kinds; communicating the project and the project alternatives to the public including both the positive and negative aspects of it and; listening and dialogue. Communication as a one-way activity from the promoter to the public is never sufficient. It can even be counterproductive (Fisher, Ury 1991:37; Kraybill 2004; Renn et al 1995:31-32). It must be accompanied by an intense activity of listening (which is exactly the opposite of communication) and of dialogue on the territory. The traditional tools of sociological investigation (questionnaires, interviews) can be used in this phase. Methodologies of an anthropological type (active listening, participant observation) can also be used. One speaks, in these cases, of action research, territorial animation and outreach.

At the end of the preliminary phase the proposing administration should have a map of the actors, a picture of the parties who may be interested in mobilising (in favour or against) around the various stakes prefigured by the project Bobbio (2004:23).

At this point the proposing administration should be able to answer the question “with whom” or at least make a few plausible hypotheses. Generally, depending on the gravity and the diffusion of the impacts, three different configurations of the decision-making arena can be imagined (Bobbio 2004:24).

The first configuration consists in involving only representative public institutions, that is, the local territorial bodies (municipalities, provinces, mountain communities) and, possibly, the functional agencies (consortia, chambers of commerce, local health units, and sectoral development committees). This is the simplest solution, which, for the most part, is already provided for by law. The innovation might be not to limit oneself to the formal consultations laid down in the legislative texts, but to set a richer concertation process in motion. The obvious drawback is that mayors and other public authorities aren't always able to represent adequately the multiple interests present among the citizens (especially when these interests are particularly concentrated) (Fisher, Ury 1991:39; Kraybill 2004; Renn et al 1995:32; Bobbio 2004:25). Widening the decision-making arena can be an expedient strategy on the part of the local authorities to avoid being disavowed by their citizens later and hence delegitimised.

The second configuration consists in including organised groups as well: trade associations, cultural (such as Chewa chiefs council), environmental and consumer associations and the like, spontaneous citizens' committees. This is a considerably more complicated solution than the preceding one because one has to decide whom to include and this requires a complex labour of listening and negotiation. The chief drawback of this solution is that the heads of the associations have a weak, precarious relationship with

the citizens they are supposed to represent and tend to represent self-referential logics or ideological points of view (Susskind et al 2000:43-45; Forester 1999: 27; Susskind et al 1987:20-22,).

The third configuration consists in also (or prevalently) including unorganised citizens. This is the most complicated, expensive and difficult to achieve hypothesis, but in many cases it has been used with success. There are two basic ways of achieving this type of participation (Bobbio 2004: 25-26).

Firstly, voluntary participation in which citizens who wish to take part in the process are invited to come to special centers for information, discussion and debate on the basis of a structured plan, and to agree on a common position. Such forms of participation are especially suitable in territorially restricted contexts (a country ward, a city block, a small town). If the preparatory work has been done with care, participation usually proves to be high and is able to produce significant results (Bobbio 2004: 25; Kraybill 1999: 36; Renn et al 1995:33).

Secondly, random sampling technique in which a small group of citizens is drawn by lots (through some form of sampling) and is invited to discuss and come up with solutions. The basic idea is that complex decisions should be able to be handled by ordinary citizens (according to an ideal of democracy from the bottom up). The random selection is meant to avoid the inconvenience of pre-structured representation. Numerous experiments of this type have already been conducted in the United States and Northern European countries (Bobbio 2004: 25; Kraybill 1999: 36; Renn et al 1995:33).

4.2.4 How does inclusive decision-making work? (the fundamental characteristics)

Once the possible interlocutors have been identified (whether public bodies, organised groups or “everyday citizens”), the issue becomes how to get them to work together on the proposed project. There are numerous techniques for governing this process, but they are based on three fundamental characteristics: structuring, informality and transparency (Fisher 1991:37; Forester 1999:17; Susskind et al 2000:44). These also help to distinguish this approach from other, apparently participatory approaches. The participatory dimension is not completely absent in Malawi, but it is often characterised by little structuring, a high degree of formality and lack of transparency. These three factors constitute Bobbio (2000: 25) terms the fundamental inclusive decision-making process characteristics:

- 1 Structuring: the process of consensus making is a highly structured one. What is essential is to void a scenario where the discussions go on indefinitely and degenerate in general frustration. In order to ensure this, the first step is to establish the ground rules and to submit them to the participants for approval. The idea is that if the rules are reasonable and ensure ample rights of access and participation, pressure will not be exerted to break them during the game. The basic rule is maximum publicity in all phases unlike the current procedures where secrecy continues and the rural masses are only told during the execution phase. Further the rules specify who is to participate, in what form and with what decision-making powers (Bobbio 2004:26).

This type of participatory decision-making makes very limited recourse to public meetings. In such meetings the proponent tries to win over the public and is often met with open hostility. The meetings are not

designed to build towards a decision, but to record the existing power relations (Bobbio 2004:26; Wates 2000:28). The problem in consensus making is exactly the opposite, that is, to unlock the existing power relations through argumentation and negotiation. Therefore, inclusive decision-making methods are mainly based on small working groups called to operate in a continuous manner for long periods of time. They require great commitment from the persons who agree to take part, but in exchange they offer them the possibility of influencing the decision. The long experience of working together should favour mutual trust.

- 2 Informality: Although highly structured, consensual processes should be organised so as to enable informal exchanges between the participants and face-to-face relations. The participants must be able to use non-technical language and to modify their orientations in the course of the interaction. For this reason their labours must not be public. And here is another argument against public meetings: when they find themselves in front of a crowd, people are prone to uphold entrenched positions; when they meet in small groups, dialogue is more likely (Bobbio 2004:26; Wates 2000:28)..
- 3 Transparency: An administration that proposes and guides a process of the consensual type must take care to put all the cognitive elements in its possession at the public's disposal and to make the whole unfolding of the process transparent in their eyes. It must also require that all participants do the same. In order to ensure trust and transparency although these discussions are not open to the public; all project documents must be translated into and communicated in non-technical language (ordinary people and chiefs are unable to read a blueprint or think in terms of cubit metres, so it is necessary to present visual presentations of the project that make it possible for laymen to get an

idea as well); wars between experts must be avoided and; results of the discussions must be made publicly known from time to time. People must be able to know at any time what is being discussed, what point has been reached, what the next deadlines are (Bobbio 2004:26; Wates 2000:28)..

4.2.5 How? (What are the tools for inclusive decision-making?)

There are numerous techniques for managing discussion groups and handling conflicts. A few families of tools that can be usefully deployed in the concertation phase (when the participants have already been identified and the main ground rules have already been identified and the main ground rule have been laid down by mutual agreement) will suffice for our purposes here:

- 1 Brainstorming: The brainstorming technique can be used in small groups to come up with new solutions or to redefine the problem on the table. It requires a certain degree of trust between the participants and can be usefully employed when it is thought that the stalemate in the discussion is due to a lack of ideas. The brainstorming method is based on two basic rules: participants can come up with any proposal whatsoever; and criticising the idea presented is absolutely forbidden (Bobbio 2004:27; Kraybill 1999:19; Wates 2000:29; Susskind et al 1987:20).
- 2 Simulations: Often the discussion of a project (and its alternatives) cannot go forward if its concrete implications are not understood. It is then necessary to try to simulate the project's consequences by various means (a model, a graphic representation) and to allow participants to make their own additions, corrections, modifications or integrations to the project. This method makes it possible to present alternative scenarios, and allows participants to get a more precise idea and to

express their preferences in concrete fashion (Bobbio 2004:27; Kraybill 1999:20; Wates 2000:29; Susskind et al 1987:21)..

- 3 Multi-criteria analysis. When one has to choose between well mapped out alternatives, multi-criteria analysis can be used. It can help to find a solution, and also just to get an understanding of what are the basic dilemmas. It involves considering and discussing in depth the various factors that can affect the project (Bobbio 2004:27; Kraybill 1999:19; Wates 2000:29; Susskind et al 1987:20).
- 4 Negotiation: Despite the efforts made to clarify the terms of the question, it is very likely that on some stakes conflicts (of interests and points of view which often happens with chiefs in Malawi) will remain. Such conflicts normally present themselves as zero-sum games: if one party gets what it wants, the other feels defeated, and vice versa. Zero-sum games cannot be solved through discussion: what counts are power relations. Through negotiation, however, one can seek to transform zero-sum games into positive-sum games, situations where all the parties make gains (Bobbio 2004:28; Kraybill 1999:19; Wates 2000:29; Susskind et al 1987:20).

The inclusive decision-making process can be greatly aided by a decentralised administrative system.

4.3 The Definition of Decentralisation

Just like any other definition it is not easy to come up with a comprehensive definition of decentralisation. However, scholars have theorised that there are several 'shades' of decentralisation.

George F Gant (1972) tries to make a distinction between decentralisation,

devolution and deconcentration. He argues that “decentralisation” is the process of deployment by assigning public functions to subdivisions of a national government, either local governments, or field offices. Gant says that when functions are decentralised by assignment to state and local government the process is called “devolution” and “deconcentration” when they are delegated to field offices of the central government.

Gant’s choice of words is a bit confusing and fails to clarify the distinction between these three terms. According to Chambers 21st Century Dictionary, decentralisation means “..from one main central place to several smaller less central places”, and devolution means “.... the giving of certain powers to a regional government by a central government” or “of power, duties etc to be transferred or transfer them to someone else” . With these explanations Gant’s definitions do not clearly bring out the aspect of power in defining devolution. This clarifies the point that assignment of functions in a devolved system goes together with power in specific areas whilst in decentralisation the ultimate power or authority still rests with the central government. In deconcentration again the key word in Gant’s definition is delegation. To delegate means “to give (part of one’s work, power etc) to someone else” or “to send or name someone as a representative, as the one to do a job, etc” (Chambers 21st Century Dictionary). Deconcentration therefore, assumes that the holder of authority retains it but decides to give someone else the leeway to act in his/her position. Decentralisation carries with it the implication of creation of structures away from the centre.

For better understanding the whole process should be presented as a continuum from de-concentration-to-decentralisation-to-devolution. When the system has gone through this process then it can be referred to as a decentralised system. In effect it seems Gant began defining the process

from the end of the continuum to the beginning. However de-concentration, seems to fit in both centralised and decentralised systems where there is the “shedding” of responsibilities. Therefore, strict adherence to the continuum is not necessary as this depends on the level at which changes are coming in.

Seen from another simpler angle UNESCO (2000) argues that ‘decentralisation implies moving away from compact structures where power is concentrated at the top, in favour of more loosely fragmented structures, with a view to achieving not only a better geographical distribution of activities, but also a down-scaling of budgetary commitments’. Decentralisation makes it possible to get closer to the field and so to see the development-related problems of each society in more concrete terms.

Munyonyo (1999:2-3) and Nsibambi (1992:166) agree that devolution refers to a form of political decentralisation where a local government has an established local assembly with usually elected members. The local government to which power is transferred is given a corporate status, autonomy and functions. Decision making authority is given to autonomous local governments or special statutory bodies, with their own personnel whom they can appoint and dismiss. This is a system, which is characterised by a high level of local government autonomy.

Deconcentration, on the other hand, refers to administrative decentralisation where officials appointed by the centre are posted to the field to act as central government representatives. These officials vary in the extent to which they freely exercise discretion in the performance of their duties (Wallis 1998:122).

Regardless of which definition is used a basic principle in selecting functions for decentralisation - for the delegation of responsibilities and action to a local agency - is the nature and location of those functions. Functions, which have only, or predominantly local significance, along with functions that depend substantially for their performance upon information and resources available locally, are those normally and naturally assigned to local agencies and structures (Hadington and Wilson 2003:27; Collins, Omar, Tarin 2002:123-146; Jeppson 2002: 253-2060). Some functions, such as the development and operation of energy and communications system, are clearly functions to be performed by central or large regional organisations. Other functions are better suited to local than to central administration, such as community roads, markets, local water supply, dikes, and schools.

There are, however, problems arising from decentralisation, which must not be underestimated:

- Local interests may sometimes distort activities in the course of their implementation;
- The difficulty of ensuring that projects are coherent, well co-ordinated, and carefully monitored; and
- Greater difficulty in maintaining co-ordination between the central offices and the field.

4.4 Factors for Successful Decentralisation and Public Management

In the struggle to improve public sector management a concept emerged in the nineties in the public and development administration circles. This was called New Public Management. As Charles Polidano puts it “the new

public management has come to dominate new thinking about public sector reform by practitioners and academics alike” (Polidano, 1992: 5-10). He summarises the general agreement on the key interpretations of what the new public management consisted. It included “deregulation” of line management, “conversion” of civil service departments into free-standing agencies or enterprises, “performance-based accountability” particularly through contracts and “competitive mechanisms” such as contracting-out, internal markets, privatisation and downsizing.

Curiously though, Polidano argues that decentralisation falls outside the new public management domain. His justification is that the term decentralisation means different things to different people. Scholars and practitioners of the new public management see decentralisation as giving line managers in government departments and agencies greater managerial authority and responsibility. He says that on the other hand developing countries see decentralisation as the devolution of political power to lower levels of government usually elected local authorities (Pallai 2001:1; Litvack 1999; Land and Hauck 2003:47).

Indeed if the policy document is anything to go by, decentralisation in Malawi is geared towards achieving more than management decentralisation. In fact the document focuses more on devolution of political power, giving greater authority to local authorities for mobilizing increased participation of communities in development administration.

If the new public management entailed practically achieving deregulation of public management, conversion of civil service into free-standing agencies (i.e. local assemblies and government departments) and performance based accountability, then in all fairness new public

management should include changes such as decentralisation that give local communities (or the greater public) greater opportunities to participate in their own development administration (Lister and Betley 1999; Lauckner 2000:23; Kerr 1998). It seems to this author that there is little difference, if any, between conversion of civil service into freestanding agencies and devolution of political power to local governments.

In Malawi, the Civil Service reform is complemented by several other public sector reforms. The reforms include aspects of local government reform. In 1995, the Malawi Government commissioned a capacity assessment and resource needs study of local authorities with a view to identifying functions and services which should be devolved to local authorities, and to work out an institutional arrangement for local government at district council level (Government Of Malawi 1995). The study was also carried out to help Government develop a decentralisation policy and legislative framework for a new local government system (Government Of Malawi 1995; Muva 2002). The primary goal of Local Government reform was to create an enabling environment through a participatory and bottom up approach. This seems to fit in with the requirements of the new public management propounded above.

The active participation of the local authorities, and the integration of a development programme or project into the existing socio-cultural structures, are both necessary conditions if a programme or project is to be truly rooted in local realities (Chapel 1982:24; Timsit 1982: 39-50). The structures can be traditional (elders' councils) or modern (voluntary co-operative movements especially in the rural world). For instance, co-operative structures cannot be imposed if they are incompatible with the existing community structures. (UNESCO, 2000).

The involvement of communities through Chiefs in development process is essential if public sector changes and decentralisation are to be successful. Involvement must be ongoing and take the form of balanced communication where the central government and external sponsor play the role of catalysts whose expertise can only be called on when necessary, and where the local authorities and other local stakeholders are fully involved in concrete terms (World Bank 1996: 4). Hence, decentralization is theoretically the best-suited administrative system to ensure empowerment of communities to own their projects. Theoretically, because no perfect model exists and its practical suitability requires adjustment so that the method used is relevant to the socio-cultural context as opposed to rigid prescriptions.

As well as decentralising its activities, government may allow them to be taken over by NGOs, whose simpler organisational structures and more direct contact with both traditional authorities and local district authorities are invaluable and central assets in securing a project's continuing success (Dafflon 2004: 86-97; Dafflon 1992: 283 –298; Wiseman 1987:383-410).

A form of decentralisation that guarantees the participation of all citizens and consequently, owning their development process should, as Munyonyo (1999:3) and Nsibambi (1992:166) argue, among other things include:

- 1 Transfer of real power to local units to reduce the workload on remote and under resourced central officials
- 2 Bring political and administrative control over services to the point where they are actually delivered thus improving accountability and effectiveness and promoting people's feeling of ownership of programmes and projects executed in the areas

- 3 Free local managers from central constraints and as long term goal allow them to develop organisational structures tailored to local circumstances. These structures should ensure effective involvement of indigenous traditional leaders to represent local values beliefs and traditional structures
- 4 Improve financial accountability and responsibility by establishing a clear link between the payment of local authorities to plan, finance and manage the delivery of services to their constituents
- 5 Improve the capacity of local authorities to plan, finance and manage the delivery of services to their constituents.

A good decentralisation system must therefore, be founded on the principle of good governance in order to promote community participation in development and decision making among other policy objectives (Ikhide 1999:165; Tordoff 1994; Hussein 2003:271).

4.5 The Link Between Decentralisation, Good Governance, Democracy and Participation of Traditional Authorities

According to Husein (2003:271-273), Crook (1994:339), Cheema and Rondinelli (1983:11-13) and Mutizwa-Manfiza and Conyers (1996:79), policy advocates have justified decentralisation as a key element in building good governance, which is generally interpreted as greater accountability, transparency and pluralism. The major reasons for adoption of decentralisation are documented as political and administrative (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983:11-13; Husein 2003:271). Politically, decentralisation is considered a means to promote community participation in the policy formulation, which is regarded as a right and necessity of political democracy. Administratively, decentralisation is regarded as a key strategy that facilitates effective coordination and promotes community

participation and inclusive decision-making in development planning and implementation of policies (Mutizwa-Mangiza and Conyers 1996:79)

The term 'good governance' must be taken as a multidimensional concept, which include institutional, administrative, technical and political issues (Boeninger 1992:268; Hussein 1999: 272). The institutional dimension is concerned with the ability to get things done through structured institutional arrangements while the administrative aspect is concerned with having the right people to manage the institutions and issues. The administrative dimension is closely related to the technical one, which focuses on resources constraints and the technical know-how concerning efficient and effective utilisation of resources in quality service delivery and community development (Ikhide 1999:165; Boeninger 1992:268). The political dimension on the other hand is concerned with distribution of political authority that exists in a country. It encompasses democratic governance and such elements as decentralisation, legal and institutional frameworks, accountability transparency and popular participation (UNDP 2000:23; Ellis, Kutengule and Nyasulu 2003:1507)

In as far as decentralisation is considered to be a transfer of authority and power to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from a higher level of government to any individual, organisation or agency at a lower level (Smith 1985:1; Rondineli 1981:137) it provides the framework for the establishment and entrenchment of good governance and democracy. In this vein it becomes a key political and administrative strategy that promotes community participation through traditional authority structures in the policy formulation and development planning, and that facilitates effective coordination and implementation of policies at the local level.

Democracy, like development and decentralisation, has many definitions. The most common of the definitions however is that it is “rule of the people, by the people and for the people”(Munyonyo 1999:4; Kisubi 1996:89; Gitonga 1988:4-22). A closer look at this definition will reveal that everyone involved in the exercise of the powers associated with ruling must do so not for their own personal aggrandisement. It is not supposed to be a self-seeking exercise. The exercise of power to rule is meant to benefit the “people” external to the self although the self is part of the people. So by not being self-seeking but looking to satisfy the collective’s priorities the self also gets satisfied. The collective’s priorities in our context are community development needs.

Community development is the process by which efforts of the people at the grassroots level are united, with those of the government to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities (Sharma 2000:183). In Malawi, like most African countries, this can be done more effectively through traditional authorities. On the other hand Chiefs, who are often blamed for being undemocratic and self-seeking, must be made to understand the importance of a democratic system of administration through education programmes. Chiefs need not wield political dominance over their subjects because this will hamper genuine involvement of grassroots people.

4.6 Conclusion

We have discussed in this chapter the fundamental principles and tools of inclusive decision-making which will allow the meaningful involvement of the rural communities in general and particularly chiefs. We have also seen that the type of decentralisation that allows for this type of involvement in a

democratic way is that which provides for devolution of power and authority to lower level administrative structures as opposed to de-concentration.

Devolution refers to decentralisation where a local government has elected members of a local assembly with power to operate as an autonomous corporate entity.

De-concentration, on the other hand, only allows for transfer of responsibility to carry out tasks on behalf of the centre and power remains with the central government.

To achieve desirable results decentralisation in Malawi must be founded on the principle of good governance in order to promote community participation in development and decision-making. This would render it in tandem with current global political thinking, which regards community participation as a right and necessity of political democracy and good governance.

CHAPTER 5
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL FUNDS IN COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to look at social funds in general, and determine:

- a) what their objectives and components are and
- b) how useful they are in achieving participatory development which takes into account local socio-cultural factors such as traditional authorities.

Social funds are derived from a World Bank policy objective that has come to be accepted especially by developing countries whose populations are mired in extreme poverty to help combat this problem (World Bank 2004:1). They are intended to disburse financial resources to target populations in a rapid manner without the delays associated with central government bureaucracy.

5.2 Objectives of Social Funds

According to a World Bank report (2004:1) the main objective of social funds as originally conceived is to alleviate poverty. Social Funds allow poor people and communities to become actively involved in their own

development. They support small projects ranging from infrastructure and social services to training and micro enterprise development, which have been identified by communities and presented to the social fund for financing. Social Funds appraise, finance and supervise these grants, which then may be managed by a wide range of actors including local governments, NGOs, line ministries, community groups and local project committees. This necessitates flexibility for the social funds management to disburse funds rapidly for quick implementation of the projects. Management therefore must be independent of government and the stifling regulations/red tape of the civil service for effective procurement and disbursement procedures (World Bank 2004). For this independence to stick management must have enough funding.

5.3 Management of Social Funds

Independence of management of the fund does not mean independence to be directly involved in the implementation of the projects. Local groups plan and design their own projects and then submit those plans to the social fund management unit. Once approved, it is the responsibility of the local groups to implement the project. The local groups may consist of community-based organisations, parent-teacher organisations, non-governmental organisations, local governments, villages or even private firms (Robinson and White 1997: 4; World Bank 2004).

In other words Social Funds allow poor people to become actively involved in the development of their communities. With social fund financing and technical assistance communities identify their own development priorities (primarily in the health, education and water supply sectors) hire contractors, manage project funds and on completion of construction

manage and sustain the project

Social funds work on the assumption that involvement of local groups in the formulation and implementation of projects will more likely ensure that such projects are sustainable than where outsiders determine what projects to be implemented. In this regard social funds are highly decentralised, demand driven and participatory (Kakhobwe 2003; World Bank 2004).

However, participation alone is not enough if the ‘right people’ do not get involved. At all stages of project identification and implementation social fund staff are marginally available to provide technical assistance. In most cases community meetings are held throughout the subproject implementation to discuss progress. As indicated earlier in the discussion on chiefs as a cultural factor, in Malawi if the chief is not meaningfully involved even if a great number of other community members are involved, the project will face the problem of sustainability (Kakhobwe 2003; World Bank 2004). Just like social funds local groups would need local government authorities that have advantages of economies of scale, statutory powers to tax and other resource mobilisation techniques and a longer-term vision. They would also need chiefs for community mobilisation itself and local organisation.

5.4 Advantages of Social Funds vis-à-vis Community Participation

The World Bank designed its social funds portfolio in such a way that they are timely and quick-disbursing to the projects they finance by virtue of their autonomy and simple administrative procedures (Romeo 1996: 12-21; Carvalho 1994; Schroeder et. al. 1998).

Social funds are responsive to communities and local markets through allowing governments to build on the efforts of communities and markets through community identification and contributions and the employment of private contractors.

In terms of reaching peer communities, social funds appear to be well targeted, cost efficient and accountable. They are able to distribute resources to communities previously seen by government agencies or private sector organization as undeserving.

In view of possible changes in the needs and priorities of communities social funds are flexible such that they can quickly adjust to changed circumstances. They can also serve a variety of objectives simultaneously; work with different types of organizations and finance projects in one or more sector depending on the specific needs of a country. This institutional flexibility together with use of simple targeting mechanisms and the promotion of the social fund to organizations and low-income communities and help to expand the funds' geographic coverage beyond the major population centers. Official funds have low overheads and have been seen to outperform other development interventions on financial and public accountability. They are able to provide infrastructure at low cost due to low administrative costs.

The coordination among international donors, local level governments, NGOs, private sector firms and community organizations has been improved by the emergence of social funds which bring together a number of actors in socio-economic development.

Social funds also increase trust in the public sector among communities. In

Malawi a beneficiary assessment of community participants found that their trust in government in general had increased due to their experience in working with the Malawi Social Action Fund.

Where social funds have been run it has been consistently easy to attract other donors for additional funding.

5.5 Disadvantages of Social Funds vis-à-vis Community Participation

In spite of the above advantages social funds also have limitations. The first limitation of social funds is resources. Due to limited resources social funds must not exist in isolation but as part of a larger coordinated effort to meet social and economic needs. They must be taken as only one of the many institutional mechanisms for meeting the economic, political and social needs of the country.

For effective outreach to the very poor sections of the community social funds must implement more active measure to ensure wider reach, improved targeting, improved/increased promotion of the social fund to poor communities, additional technical assistance and financing incentives to NGOs.

Social Funds face a trade off between rapid implementation of projects and building institutional and technical capacity, particularly in the poorest areas where more time, training and technical assistance is required. This is particularly important since projects that have higher levels of community participation have been shown to have a greater likelihood of proper operations and maintenance over the full life of the project.

Finally social funds run the risk of running almost as parallel governments where learning between them and the rest of the public sector is minimal thereby confusing beneficiaries and not contributing to capacity building.

5.6 The History of Social Funds in Malawi

A similar programme has been working in Malawi. Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) has been duped an exemplary programme in the Southern African region. It has succeeded in transferring funds to local community groups to create social wealth (UNDP: 1998; World Bank 2004; MASAF 2003).

Although data on inter-district distribution of MASAF funded projects show substantial disparities in per capita allocations, this outcome is not necessarily undesirable. It should not be considered a surprising outcome from a demand driven approach to funding allocation (GOM 1998; MASAF 1998). Furthermore, since local community demand is probably a strong determinant of longer-term sustainability of a project, such outcomes can be considered superior to outcomes where all localities receive very similar amounts of funding, but communities where the funded projects are not demanded end up wasting the resources (MASAF 1998: 4; Apthorpe et. al. 1995).

The inter-district differences in allocations even within the same region, illustrate one of the principal features of decentralised power to make such decisions, the outcomes are more likely to reflect those needs than if

allocations are made centrally. What may appear to be the priority needs of a community to the central authorities may not necessarily be perceived to be so by the particular community.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that the basic intention of social funds is to support small community projects in infrastructure, social services, training and micro-enterprises. They work on the assumption that projects are sustainable if local communities/groups are involved in the formulation and implementation of projects. Social funds are in a position to bring about improvement in the social wealth of the community because of their administrative autonomy and subtle procedures as well as flexibility. We have also seen that social funds raise the community's trust in government. Finally although social funds may not equitably distribute social wealth among communities, they make allocations according to needs of the communities.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS OF FIELD RESEARCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT ROLE OF CHIEFS IN DECENTRALISED PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN MALAWI

6.1 Introduction

Field research recognized that a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods could yield insights that do not occur utilizing either type of the method on its own (Booth, Holland, Hentschel, Lanjouw and Herbert 1998; White 2002:511-518; Ellis, Kutengule and Nyasulu 2003:1499). District and Villages were selected on the basis of convenience in terms of proximity and accessibility. Application of these criteria led to the choice of one district, (Lilongwe) in the Central Region of Malawi, one traditional authority, (TA Malili) and ten villages in the TA.

Since Chapter 1 gives details of the research design, it is not prudent to repeat the details of the methodology used here except to say that the purpose of the research was to find out the views of people on decentralization in Malawi vis-à-vis the development role of traditional authorities. For this purpose observation, questionnaires, group discussions and face-to-face interviews were used (UNISA 2004:35).

In this discussion Malawi's decentralization history and the current policy shall be examined and critiqued based on the research findings, to find out to what extent the policy has realized and will realize its objectives and what remains to be done with respect to the development role of traditional authorities (Munyonyo 1999:2). Its premise is the understanding that decentralization must be implemented in a way that ensures participatory democracy and the advancement of rural development and takes into account the success factors that have been discussed in Chapter 4 section 4.4 above.

6.2 Malawi Background

Malawi is among the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa also called least developed countries (LDC). With a per capita Gross National Income (GNI) in 2000 of US\$180, it ranks sixth from the bottom of the World Bank listings based on the national income (Kakhobwe 2003). Social indicators for Malawi are likewise low within the category of low-income sub-Saharan African countries. The Human Development Index for Malawi stood at 0.397 in 2000 statistics putting her at number 151 out of 162 sample countries surveyed (UNDP 2001).

The factors of history, geography and politics have combined to make poverty reduction in Malawi an enormous challenge. Malawi is a land locked country 1500 km from seaport in any direction (Malawi of Government 1995; UNDP 2000; Kakhobwe 2003). Some 85% of the population of 10.8 million lives in rural areas and most of these are in small-farm households owning land in the range of 0.2-3 hectares.

With the background of a country that is at a natural disadvantage the important role of traditional leaders in promoting community involvement in development and political process in Malawi was recognized for several decades dating from the colonial period although not effectively implemented (Hussein 2003: 274; Apthorpe, Chiviya and Kaunda 1995: 50-56; DANIDA 1998:3).

6.2.1 Role of Chiefs in Pre-colonial Period

In the pre-colonial period of Malawi's history chiefs largely played the role of leaders in every aspect of the community. They played the judiciary role of conflict resolution and administration of justice, executive role of directing action as absolute authority and the role of the legislature in moulding rules and regulations. In addition and more importantly, the chief was the epitome of the spiritual realm. When making rules and regulations however, Chiefs resorted to a curious system of consultation with the spirits, close aids and the community at large which is not the subject of this paper and do not warrant deeper discussion (Ott 2000: 285-300). Although emanating from a non-democratic hereditary tradition, the exercise of authority through this process of consultation lends it more democratic than is popularly believed. This era can be seen to have been more democratic compared to the later colonial and immediate postcolonial eras (Phiri 1973: Pachai 1973:190).

6.2.2 Colonial Period: British Indirect Rule

In the colonial period administrative decisions were made to establish levels of traditional authority from village headman to group village headman to paramount chief or simply chief. Although Ray (1996) referring to the whole of Africa argues that this resulted in the creation of a

hybrid system of chieftaincy, which resists classification, the roles they played on a local level were not as widely different from the pre-colonial arrangement as he would wish to put across. The difference that is worth noting is that there now was another authority higher than the chief, which had different interests to local ones (Pachai 1973:191; Miller 1970:131-136). On a national level however, the higher authority assumed the power to administer justice but left arbitration of local disputes, religious/spiritual leadership, tax collection, and mobilisation of communities to carry out its directives, in the hands of Chiefs (GOM 1998).

When Malawi became a protectorate of the British Government in 1891 the British imposed indirect rule (Pachai 1973:192; Phiri 1973). Compared to direct rule favoured by the French, indirect rule left greater scope for traditional forms of organisation. Indirect rule worked through the traditional chiefs. The Governor of the Protectorate was a representative of the British Government. Provincial Commissioners came second in the hierarchy, followed by the District Commissioners (DC). The DCs were in direct contact with the local communities through Chiefs who acted as their assistants (Pachai 1972:193; Afigbo 1985: 487-507; Opoku 1985:513-530).

The role of Chiefs was maintenance of law and order, the administration of justice, tax collection and to carry out other functions as directed by the DC. The Governor was assisted by the Legislative and Executive Councils, in which African representation began much later, in 1948 and 1955 respectively (Pachai 1973:192). This period of 73 years under the British Protectorate laid the foundation for Local Government. Even then, central control of local administration did not stop in which indigenous institutions were closely and continuously directed, supervised and guided by colonial administrative officers introducing European standards and methods (Phiri

1973; Afigbo 1985:487-507). This estranged the Traditional Authorities from the mass of the people since Chiefs were now mere agents of the colonial administration that was abhorred. Even when in 1948 the Local Government (District Councils) Ordinance was passed introducing district councils whose structure and functions were broadly based on the English model it did not improve matters much (Kaunda 1999:580; Phiri 1973: 187). There was an institutional separation of rural local councils from the 'native' authorities, which remained ex-officio members of the councils.

Being an imposition of an administrative system that did not fit socio-cultural conditions of the Malawian people, the colonial administration prompted the emergence of African nationalism, which led to self-government in 1958 (Opoku 1985: 513-530; Boahen 1985: 782-809).

6.2.3 Post Colonial Period: The One Party Era

For 30 years after independence in 1964, the country was ruled by "life president" Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda whose government pursued undemocratic policies which limited political and even social and economic participation to a select elite. However, the need for active community involvement in socio-economic development was recognized by the Banda regime at the dawn of independence by adopting the form of decentralization called deconcentration (Miller 170:130; Hussein 2003:273).

According to Kaunda, and Muva (2003) in 1961 the new nationalist government introduced statutory district councils elected by all eligible adults through universal suffrage. With declaration of independence in 1964 and eventual formal establishment of the one party state in 1966 came

increased state centralisation. In addition to being an agent of the central government, advisor of district councils, trainer of local government staff, the DC became the co-ordinator of district administration.

Through the DC who reported to the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) and the District Development Committees (DDC), the central government managed to penetrate and control the rural areas to ensure the accomplishment of its policies (Malawi 1998:2; Baker 1975:6). The Chiefs Act of 1967 ensured that chiefs did not have powers to make rules or give orders by making them subordinate to DCs to help them maintain law and order, enforce his directions and contribute to the welfare and development of the districts (Malawi 1967:4; Baker 1975:7). The election of the district councillors became politicised so that each ward had to nominate at least three and not more than five candidates from whom the President would select one candidate to represent a ward. Chiefs had no say in this as in any matter at all as any thing could not be implemented without central approval. This form of decentralisation therefore, was merely administrative deconcentration of functions as opposed to devolution of decision-making power.

At community development level the DDCs had the responsibility among other things to promote development policies at the local level and to coordinate the various stages of decision-making and project management (Miller 1970:130). Community development then, required a collective effort of various institutions including the district councils, the government, chiefs and non-governmental organisations.

Simukonda (1997:8) and Hussein (2003:274) echo the observation that local people hardly had any role in the political arena which was

characterised by party supremacy, intimidation, centralisation and politicisation of the local structures and denial of human rights and basic freedoms of association, speech and dress among others. While this is true the government's agricultural through, also clearly envisaged community involvement in development and its social mobilisation policy was aimed at promoting community involvement in self-help projects at the local level (UNDP 2000:54; World Bank 1992:3). However, in spite of the well-meaning intention of the policies, by their denial of greater participation in the political destiny of their community, local structures were prevented from playing a significant role in local governance and community development (Apthorpe et al 1995:8). In this environment chiefs became an instrument of oppression.

The stripping of the autonomy of the local government and tightening of central government's grip on local administration can be gleaned from the passing of the Local Government District Council Act No. 22:02 of 1965 (Malawi 1967) which repealed and undermined the decision-making powers of district councils. Eventually, central government stripped district councils of their functions, reduced grants, withdrew some services like road maintenance and controlled staff appointments, promotion, discipline and dismissals (Kaunda 1998:52; Simukonda 1997:67).

Nevertheless, the need for effective local structures to promote community participation proved greater than the political manipulations and was emphasised in the 1993 Situational Analysis of Poverty in Malawi (Malawi 1995a:10). Accepting the findings of the analysis the Government of Malawi adopted a selective decentralisation policy implemented as a district focus strategy in 1993. The strategy was an attempt at reviving community empowerment, democratic participation, and enhanced

mobilisation of resources at a local level through administrative decentralisation and reorganisation of area and development committees (Malawi 1995a:11; UNDP 2000:62). Structures that had been deconcentrated had to be strengthened through the transfer of decision-making authority to local government agencies structures such as DDCs, district executive committees, area development committees, area executive committees and village development committees (Malawi 1995a:17-18).

6.2.4 Post Colonial Period: Multiparty Era

Interviews with Local Government authorities revealed that in 1994 the new government of the United Democratic Front party, came into power geared to follow more democratic principles of governance having learnt from the untenable previous regime's policies. It began by reorienting the previous regimes form of administrative decentralisation (deconcentration) to political decentralisation (devolution) (Nyasulu 2003: 1508; Harrigan 2001:5). The new government established a new constitution in 1995, which attempted to consolidate democratic governance by the creation of local government authorities (Malango 2000:3; Harrigan 2001:5).

Due to several reasons, both endogenous and exogenous, the new government had to follow-up the on the above provisions of the constitution and established the decentralisation policy in October 1998 (Malawi 1998; UNDP 2000:2). The endogenous factors partly emerged from the rampant poverty, which necessitated a strategy for poverty alleviation by increasing local participation and empowering people to plan and own their projects. In addition, the experiences with the one party regime that was replete with intolerance and largely concentration of decision making in a few individuals set an irreversible trend catapulted by

local civil society pressure towards a change of the development administration machinery (Phiri 2000:5; Malango 2000:3). The exogenous factors emerged from conditionalities of the donor community and the lending institutions such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for a more open, transparent and devolved administration as an element of good governance, which was a prerequisite for more aid (Phiri 2000:5; Nhlane 2001:4). Other countries following democratic principles also exerted pressure on a bilateral level.

Having talked about the background of Malawi, an understanding of the context within which the decentralisation policy of Malawi was ushered in is called for before discussing the policy itself. The following section will give an overview of general development administration in Malawi.

6.3 Current General Development Administration in Malawi

Development administration currently prevalent in the less developed countries in general was shaped primarily by the colonial overloads during their period of rule, although after achieving independence there has been some attempt at reorganizing, changing, reforming and improving the entire administrative structure to function, hopefully, effectively in the service of independent nations (Chikulo 2000:27-39; Sifin 1976:20). Nevertheless, development administration in Africa still remains a product of the colonial era, maintaining many of the features and attitudes of the former colonial establishments.

The present form of development administration in Malawi, as in most African countries is based on a system of agencies that are called ministries (Bienen 1970:100-125). During the colonial era the day-to-day

administration of development was carried out through various departments and a chief professional officer, who was in turn responsible to a colonial secretary or governor as the case may be, administered each of these. The colonial secretaries or governors were responsible for overall administrative functions and they were in turn accountable only to their imperial governments or minor Chiefs and were primarily concerned with their future careers than with the business of administration for development (Geschiere 1993:151-175; McIntosh 1992:27-40; Miller 1968:188-200).

In terms of problem solving, the patterns of administrative institutionalization during the colonial era were non-innovative and were created and organized not so much to promote development and indigenous problem-solving techniques, but rather to harmonize and consolidate elite interests (CAFRAD 1982:54-70).

With the achievement of internal self-government and political independence, decision-making and executive authority were transferred from the colonial governors and secretaries to local politicians and their cabinet (Trotha 1995:458-471). This resulted in the creation of ministerial system of administration. This new system gave native elected officials the general direction and control of the government and they were collectively responsible to their legislature (Malawi 1965).

With the creation of the ministerial system there was a shift of the locus of responsibility for policy formulation from a chief professional officer to a minister of an elected government. Each ministry is usually staffed with a principal adviser to the minister as well as several other advisers responsible for various areas of policymaking regarded as necessary (Chapel 1982:12-17). Having been the colony of Britain, Malawi moved

away from the British model of public administration. The British model is one in which the civil service is not politically controlled. This is the situation where the administrators are not servants of the person who is the Head of State or servants of any other person or groups of persons of the public or the people (Chapel 1982:12-17). Civil servants as such are non-partisan. Malawi has however, maintained the Parliament as the body representing people and enacts laws. The public administrators only implement laws and carry out the policies, and are expected to do so in business like manner and the Minister heads them. The minister acts on behalf of and reports to an Executive President.

This approach toward development administration is regarded as the orthodoxy theory in which the legal duties of the civil service are confined to the implementation of policies and accepts the concept of political neutrality as a salient feature of modern public administrative techniques (Chapel 1982:21-27).

The orthodox theory is one of formal organization based on a unified and disciplined system of authority. Such a system represents a joint or collective effort for achieving specified objectives.

This model of organization is a meritocracy. The civil servant is selected or recruited on the basis of merit and guaranteed a career in the service with career development and promotion based on his or her performance and security. The orthodox theory is therefore based on the principle of a clear line of authority defining superior – inferior relationships or a pattern of hierarchy (Timsit 1982:37-51).

6.3.1 Problems of Development Administration in Malawi

The administration of development in Malawi as in the rest of Africa has always had some serious drawbacks just like in the rest of the LDCs. As Hope argues (1984:71; Timsit 1982:37-50) first there is a general lack of high-level manpower necessary for policy implementation. This refers to the scarcity of trained administrators, which is the direct result of lack of proper manpower planning and assessment, which lead to poor government recruitment policies and ultimately chronic brain drain. Before the decentralization there existed a highly bureaucratic civil service and excessive centralization of authority and control (Kaunda 1999:579-580; Useem and Chipande 1991:238). This is reflected in government ministries assuming total control of their respective ministries and departments in terms of decision making and paying inadequate attention to or giving little opportunity to middle or lower level civil servants to participate in the decision making process or in the development process. This situation continued to be perpetrated because the civil service has become an institution in which personnel survival, in terms of longevity of service depends on political affiliation (Tonkovic 1982:125-133).

Moreover, there exists a great deal of friction, tension and mutual suspicion between government ministries and career officials. Both the ministers and the career officials have adopted an attitude toward the implementation of policy that has alienated the public, especially the rural majority, and hampered the effective functioning of the government (Tonkovic 1982:125-133). Career civil servants are in a position of great insecurity due to the enormous powers of the government ministers. Most of the career civil servants, if not all of them, are better educated than the ministers and usually disagree with their superiors' decisions pertaining to the administration of development (Chapel 1982:21-27). The ministers on the

other hand, conscious of their newly acquired powers and determined to dispel any suggestion of inferiority, are anxious to assert their authority and to make it clear beyond doubt who are the masters (United Nations, 1982:49-50). Inevitably then, for reasons of survival within the civil service, career civil servants have to adopt a compromising, sycophantic and fanatical attitude toward their ministers; offering technical and administrative advice to these ministers not in a firm and objective manner but by attempting to anticipate the advice the ministers want (Chapel 1982:21-27; Msosa 2003:1-11).

The ultimate result of all these manifestations is a lack of coordination of policies among departments and a lack of dissemination of information for effective decision-making (Msosa 2003:1-11; Hindle 1996:3). Invariably then, the few individuals at the apex of the decision-making pyramid, namely the ministers, are hard pressed to cope with the range of decisions they have to make. The effect is necessarily either procrastination and long delays or inadequate and inept policies. We shall come back to examine some suggestions for improvement of development administration in Malawi but for now let us look at the reasons for the above lack of advancement by looking at the cultural approach from two seemingly contradictory perspectives.

The first is that Malawi has not developed fast enough because it has lacked a culture conducive to indigenous development based on its own resources. It has tended to be highly centralized giving little room for decentralized elements (Msosa 2003:1-11; Hindle 1996). The second is that all development efforts in Malawi have not taken on board the existing culture such as chiefs as the spring board for an ultimately development oriented cultural value system unique to itself. Instead they have striven to replace

African values with those alien to its people without proper audits and structures, which has resulted in confusion and inability to internalize these alien concepts and approaches resulting in lack of congruency between culture, chiefs the state, power and legitimacy. (Schmidt 1997:41-44; Bate 1995:9; Fehnel 1997:337).

6.3.2 Relation between Culture, Chiefs, the State, Power and Legitimacy

There is a significant potential in Malawian culture to reorganise communities at the grassroots level for successful development projects through the resource qualities of chiefs.

Many authors have studied the relationship between chieftains and the state in Africa from the pre-colonial, through colonial to post-colonial periods. The studies have revealed that there is a power struggle between these two institutions (Kaunda 1998:51-58; Griggs 1992). The examination of this power struggle will give us the base from which to assess the development role of chiefs vis-à-vis the decentralisation process in Malawi.

Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal (1996:2, Nkosi, Kirsten, Bhembe and Sartorius von Bach 1994:282-286) examines the basis of power of chiefs in the modern state. He argues that Chiefs have re-emerged as a vehicle for authentic indigenous expression. He further argues that Chiefs have great room for manoeuvre that is “larger than the formal constitutional and administrative legal models”. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal ascribes this manoeuvring capability to the chiefs’ dual source of power: “From tradition chiefs derive their sacred and other customary powers. From the modern state chiefs attempt to capture resources in the forms of development projects and taxes’ (van Rouveroy van Nieuwal 1996: 2; Ray 1996: 198).

Von Trotha (1995; Bekker 1993: 200) argues that the colonial and post-colonial states have tried to use chiefs in an 'administrative chieftaincy' capacity, characterised by, 'hierarchy' and 'administrative district'. He sees the reliance of the colonial and post-colonial states on chiefs to act as 'instruments of intermediary administration between the state and local people' as a demonstration of the weakness of the state. It also reflects the lack of integration between state and society. It could further be a result of the resistance of not only the chiefs themselves but also the society as a whole, which sees the preservation of this institution as the only avenue for cultural retainment available to it.

As Trotha (1995) also states, Chiefs continue to draw their strengths from their local roots: 'they defend local culture and social order as well as being at the centre of local political life'. Von Trotha suggests that the state should recognise the *de facto* pluralism and institutionalise the chiefs' independent legal system in selected areas (1995; Ray 1996:186). Much as this ensures that local interests are preserved there is the threat of injustice, as different chiefs may come up with different interpretations of justice especially where traditional statutes are not well documented as the case in Malawi. Further, in the face of the international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, outside intervention will always be there even in the absence of local challenge. Van Trotha though, recognises this but insists that local autonomy overrides this concern. Van Trotha's next argument however is more plausible, he maintains that local problems must be solved locally (1995; Schmidt 1997:41). Local people must determine their own interest and this can be done more efficiently if the state and chieftaincies transform together.

Whereas Trotha sees the recognition of local systems of dispute resolution as leading to legal competition between State and Chiefs (1995; Ray 1996:193-198), this study treats them as complementary to the state judiciary. Treating the two systems as competitive has the disadvantage of entrenching the divisions between state and chieftaincies and among chieftaincies themselves. This is counterproductive where the aim is to ensure unity of purpose in the delivery of justice through integration within diverse interests. The state/central government is useful in a myriad of aspects, which include the general development policy directing role, international relations and the provision of legal frameworks to guide general human rights sensitive behaviour (Msosa 2003:7-8; Nkhoma and Kandoole 1996). As regards the execution of projects indeed, local systems, not only dispute resolution but also, community management, needs to be respected. Chieftains must be given legal administrative autonomy to reject (within national interest guidelines) ideas contrary to local community interests and feelings.

True to their hitherto role, Chiefs are not only guardians and embodiments of tradition but they are also active agents of the present and the future and promote the well being of the community (Holomisa 1999:43). This is what validates chieftaincy. Chiefs do not represent people because no one can truly represent another but they conform to the same tradition as the community and for that reason they are closer to the people in terms of attitudes, beliefs and interests. Although on the surface it looks as though, being an ascriptive position, chieftaincy is contrary to the tenets of democracy, history has demonstrated that incompetent chiefs could be removed (Gondwe 2002:3) (see Annex 4).

Tribal lineage as a criterion for selection to chieftaincy has also been cited

as being unmeritocratic. However, the way Malawian communities are arranged, the probability of a village community consisting of members of the same lineage is very high with the exception in cases where immigrants have been allowed to settle. Even these become assimilated and are expected to follow local values and norms and, as time goes on due to intermarriages, their households also become part of the tribal lineage. Nevertheless, in response to the requirements of the modern, administrative and political challenges it is imperative and apparent that in future, chiefs would be drawn from the educated tribal lineage with close links to the local communities, a process that has already began (Matebule 2002:3) (see Annex 3).

The important aspect of chieftaincy that must emerge in the transformation is therefore, that the Chiefs become a forum for the articulation, debate, resolution and defence of local interests in discussions with the central and local governments (World Bank 1996:152-160). In this regard chieftaincy must be autonomous but subject to the direction and guidance of both local and government governments so that their actions are in line with national policy. Further, the state being a recent institution in the history of administration, chieftaincies have to be taken as complementary residual entities that must be preserved for their advantage in mobilising communities (Ikhide 1999:165; Tordoff 1994; Husein 2003:1).

The history of Chiefs in Malawi dates centuries back where they were the central vehicles for any development that took place then (Phiri 1972:36). Even today, they are very rife and a cultural force to reckon with. From migrant communities to settlements, Chiefs led their communities in every venture from war to peace, from hunger to abundance. They are a source of great wealth of knowledge gained over centuries of experience and

transmitted through successive generations of tribal lineage.

6.4 The Malawi Decentralisation Policy

With advent of the decentralised system of local governance, the function relating to Chiefs is located in the Department of Local Government at central level. The provisions of the Chiefs Act locate the responsibility for Chiefs administration in the President's Office. Appointment of the Chief (TA) is normally hereditary, but the government confirms the appointment. The traditional authority is elaborately structured and starts with the Village Headman at the lowest level, then Group Village Headman, Traditional Authority, Senior Chief on top, and in some districts, a Paramount Chief at the very highest top. As of 1998 the numbers of the traditional leaders were as follows (GOM 2000):

	North	Center	South	Total
Paramount Chiefs	1	1	1	3
Traditional Authorities	30	56	74	160

Source: Malawi Government Decentralisation Report, 2000

According to prevailing census records in Malawi a Traditional Authority has approximately 100, 000 subjects under his jurisdiction (Government of Malawi 1998). These subjects are divided into several groups of villages each comprising on average 30 households headed by a Village Headman who reports to a Group Village Headman who reports to the Traditional Authority who in turn as the case may be reports to the paramount Chief. The groups are divided either according to origin, family name or tribe.

As discussed earlier chiefs have the opportunity to exercise their role more effectively if local government structures are made more autonomous than they were in the one party era. The objectives of the decentralisation policy are, basically three-fold; Firstly to empower local communities to participate in making decisions with the ultimate goal of achieving poverty alleviation; Secondly, to integrate government agencies at district level to create an administrative unit in which each level has specific roles and; Lastly, to open up decision making to achieve good governance (Malawi 1998:3).

The 1995 constitution established the local government authorities comprising of urban and district assemblies as well as district councils. It provided for the establishment of the National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC) to supervise collection and disbursement of funds. It also provided that local governments should keep such proportion of the revenues they collect as shall be prescribed by the (NLGFC). The constitution also provides that the “composition of local government authorities includes a prescribed number of ...Chiefs” (Malawi 1999:75). Section 146 Sub-section (2) gives the functions of local government authorities as:

- “(a) the promotion of infrastructure and economic development, through the formulation and execution of local development plans and the encouragement of business enterprise;
- (b) the presentation to central government authorities of local development plans and the promotion of the awareness of local issues to the central government;
- © the consolidation and promotion of local democratic institutions and democratic participation; and
- (d) such other functions, including the registration of births and deaths

and participation in the delivery of essential and local services, as may be prescribed by any Act of Parliament.” (Malawi 1999: 75).

Chiefs also became ex-officio members of District Development Committees in addition to members of the various political parties and leaders of non-governmental organisations. Their role has also not changed because the Chiefs Act of 1967 Section 7 has not been repealed. While there were plans to repeal it (Muva 2002) at the time of research the Chiefs Act assigned to chiefs the following roles:

- “(a) to preserve the public peace,
- (b) to carry out traditional functions under customary law in so far as the discharge of such functions is not contrary to the Constitution or any written law and not repugnant to natural justice and morality.
- © to assist in collection of tax,
- (d) to assist in the general administration of the District in which his area is situate and for such purpose to carry out such functions as the District Commissioner may require and,
- (e) for any of the purposes mentioned in paragraphs (a), (c) and (d) to carry out and enforce any lawful directions of the District Commissioner.” (Malawi 1967)

After five years the provisions of the constitution for local government elections for councillors were finally held in 1999 at the heels of passing of the Local Government Bill into law in the same year. The official reasons for the delay point at lack of funding but the reality on the ground is that the ruling party had a minority membership of the parliament and local elections posed the threat of opposition parties gaining the majority of district and urban councils. The ruling party realised with this that its hope of penetrating into the rural areas was through the support of chiefs. The

ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) party constitution gives chiefs more prominence. This ought to reflect the views of the majority of people on the importance of chiefs today.

6.4.1 What are the objectives and design of the decentralisation process?

The decentralisation structure that is in place in Malawi on at the time of research according to the policy is that depicted in Figure 1 below. As can be read from the structure, the policy provides that chiefs chair the Village Development Committees (VDC). This means they are responsible for initiating projects in the village and as ex-officio members of the ward assemblies they oversee the implementation as well.

Figure. 1: Structure of Decentralisation in Malawi

National Level

District Level

Ward Level

6.4.2 What factors will lead to the success or failure of decentralisation in

Malawi?

6.4.2.1 Community Participation

The majority of respondents pointed out that improved community participation would contribute to the success of the decentralisation policy. This was borne out by their responses to the question whether they were consulted when the policy was being introduced.

According to 82% of the Local Government officials interviewed, Chiefs were oriented on the decentralisation policy through cluster workshops. However opposite responses were obtained from the communities as to the extent to which they were involved in the whole process.

According to Chiefs themselves (100%), they had only heard about decentralisation but did not clearly understand it because they were not consulted at its initiation nor were they oriented or trained on it. Observation also revealed that most other lower level ministry officials whose functions would have to be devolved in line with the decentralisation policy such as ministries of education, water resources, health and works also claimed that they were not consulted and did not understand the operations of the new system.

TA Malili being one of the few educated Chiefs, argued that the policy was a good one if officials followed it to the book. The problem, according to him in agreement with the rest of the other Chiefs, is the operationalization of the requirements of the policy. DCs, councillors and MPs only use the Chiefs when they fail to mobilise communities but do not want to recognise their perpetual contributions to the communities' day-to-day involvement in socio-economic issues. He further said that this recognition should be

backed by effective fiscal devolution so that Chiefs also have transparent budgets for community development projects, which will be accounted for by local project committees and maintained and supervised by the DCs and audited by external auditors (Malili:2002). Ordinary villagers (77%) also did not know much about decentralisation, its aims and operations.

Some positive developments arising from decentralisation initiatives identified during interviews with the public were the growing interest among people to take part in decision making, particularly in proposing solutions to their development needs; the spreading of the idea about the bottom-up approach in development; and genuine attempts in some districts to involve the community during the formulation, implementation and evaluation of projects (Musukwa 2001:1; UNDP 2000:119; Hussein 2003 276).

6.4.2.2 The role of political factors on decentralisation in Malawi

Indeed the success or failure of decentralisation in Malawi will largely depend on political will, proper legal framework, devolution of power and authority, fiscal decentralisation, civic education, commitment by politicians to involve Chiefs, commitment by Chiefs themselves, local administration and central government officials, economic empowerment of communities and human resource development (Msosa 2003:8-9; Talk 2003:4).

As indicated by local government officials (71%) and Chiefs themselves (100%), often there is resistance to devolve power from central government to the local government on the one hand and from local government to Chiefs on the other. Training and civic education will work towards

delimiting the extent of authority of the players in the administrative structure particularly the Members of Parliament (MP), Chiefs, councillors, police and local government administrators (World Bank 2000:114-119). Consequently if training is not planned for, factors of inadequate resources and human capacity will mitigate the possible successes of the process. In addition, diversity in ethnicity coupled with undue political interference will lead to lack of a common vision and prioritisation of needs in the community (World Bank 2000:113; Dafflon 1992:283-289).

On project management, sometimes it can be difficult for the upper levels of the hierarchical structure to take into account the specificity of the context of a project and the diversity of the situations with which they have to deal. In this sense, faithful political compliance with provisions of decentralisation policy makes it possible to get closer to the field and to see the development-related problems of each society in more concrete terms (World Bank 1996:8; Hadingham 2003:5).

Further, in a country like Malawi where most administrative districts correspond to the number of people of a particular socio-cultural group, local interests may sometimes distort activities in the course of their implementation (Gomani 2003). Decentralisation will also face the difficulty of ensuring that projects are coherent, well co-ordinated and carefully monitored as well as of maintaining co-ordination between the decision-making centres and the field (Hadingham 2003:5-6).

In addition, some villagers indicated that others of their colleagues were unwilling to contribute to self-help projects initiated by a rival political party. Thus development activities and projects tend to be highly politicised in certain areas.

Other factors that will influence the success or failure of the decentralisation process in Malawi include funding and people's perceptions about the participation of traditional authorities

6.4.2.3 Funding and Fiscal Decentralisation

The Malawi Government developed a comprehensive implementation plan of decentralisation which was presented at a conference organised in the capital Lilongwe on 24 – 25 August, 2001 by the Vice President and the Minister of Finance (The Nation 2001; The Lamp 2004). The conference discussed components of the plan, which include: the legal framework, civic education, local government elections, administrative reform, fiscal reform, accounting and financial management, devolution of functions and local development planning. Each of these components has its specific activities, resource requirements timeframe and corresponding cost estimates. The total cost of the plan was estimated at US\$50 million covering the period between 2001 – 2004. Of this amount the Government of Malawi had about US\$3 million, and about US\$47 million was to be sought from donors wherein lies the threat of rendering the process donor driven. As local government official (81%) pointed out donor funding priorities and conditionalities might lie elsewhere other than effective participation of traditional authorities (Government of Malawi 2001).

The conference made several observations. For instance it was observed that the fiscal monitoring mechanism was not clearly defined in the plan. Other issues raised were about the strategies of rendering support to Government by donors. Two strategies were proposed: bilateral decision by a specific donor to take a specific component of the plan and provide the

required resources or the use of the basket funding approach. Both approaches have strengths and shortfalls. The first one has the danger of many donors congregating around one or few specific components of their interest thereby leaving other components without funding (UNDP 2003; talk 2003:4). This would adversely affect the implementation of the plan. The second option would be better for government, which would be in charge of the resources and be able to allocate them according to the plan. The first shortfall here however, is that the donors and other non-governmental organisations have become increasingly sceptical about government's record of accountability of public resources. Secondly there is an unelaborated fear among the donors that such an approach can easily make them fail to attach their usual labels to what they contribute since it would be treated as pool funding (Talk 2003:4-5).

Although the Government of Malawi boasts about the decentralisation process having been a widely consultative flexible and accommodating to various views (this has not been confirmed by research), the weakest part of the plan is where it seeks top-up funding of close to US\$47 million. This is far from being realistic. Who own the decentralisation process in Malawi, is it the donors or Malawians? Since the transition from the one party era, it has increasingly become the order of the day to refer everything to donors for funding, be it community projects, food, including the construction of mausoleums. If decentralisation is a national priority area it is not realistic to commit US\$3 million as government's contribution and wait for the donors to provide the rest. The small funding committed by government to the implementation plan reflects lack of the feeling of ownership of the plan due to too much donor influences through cases like 'appraisal exercises' over government intentions and plans. If this is the case then the plan has no owner and traditional chiefs' role falls victim to the whims of the

donors. If the donors decide that Chiefs are not essential especially when they are perceived as illiterate, then they would be pushed to the margins of insignificance where they would be unable to mobilise meaningful community participation in any development efforts.

At project level one of the most common ways to get resources to the local level if properly executed is through municipal funds, matching grants, and community development funds that decentralise functions and money to existing line agencies and local governments. Under such arrangements central governments allocate resources to municipalities, assemblies and local authorities, which in turn fund many smaller projects. These subprojects are often prepared and controlled by committees, which contribute to cost-sharing through the donation of their labour and materials. Simple procurement procedures along with democratic and transparent project selection at neighbourhood and municipal levels contribute to the success of these types of funding arrangements. Through their ability to reach the neighbourhood level and mobilise local resources they remove one of the critical constraints to community action, the lack of financial resources (World Bank 1996:164; Dafflon 2004:86-97).

In the Malawi system two main revenue sources for local governments were identified in the policy; locally generated revenues and central government transfers. Locally generated revenues comprise of the traditional sources such as property rates, ground rent, fees and licences, commercial undertakings and service charges while central government transfers include ceded revenue and direct transfers. Ceded revenue comprises of non-taxable income such as toll fees; gambling and casino fees, which will be collected by central government and then redistributed to local government. Government direct transfer will comprise of the

national revenue excluding grants to be used for development of districts which will be distributed by the Local Government Finance Committee (LGFC) in accordance with a formula approved by parliament which will take into account factors of population size, level of development derived from poverty indicators, equalisation and district revenue collection. These transfers will constitute at least 5% of national revenues (Malawi 1998; Farrant and Clarke 2002:8-13)

6.5 Perceptions about Participation of Traditional Authorities

There are two opposing views about the importance of traditional authorities in development today. The first view argues that Chiefs, having been used by the colonial regime to rule the indigenous populations, do not fit into a modern democratic system. It maintains that African politicians depend on chiefs only to maintain the aura of cultural identity, African tradition, and values and to some extent African religion all of which are perceived as conservative and incompatible with democratic government. 99% of respondents to the question whether Chiefs are important as custodians of culture answered affirmatively confirming the first viewpoint.

The argument continues to say that the institution of chieftainship is not in accordance with the precepts of democracy because a chief's title is hereditary and not elective. This makes it difficult to remove a mischievous or incompetent chief. Further, most chiefs are men, which is contrary to the democratic ideal of a non-sexist society. Although modern African societies are multi racial, only indigenous tribal Africans can become chiefs and this goes against the non-racist principles and can also lead to divisions between tribes hampering the creation of a cohesive nation state (Bekker 1993: 2000; Rangan and Gilmartin 2002:652-655). In some instances where

chiefs are no longer hereditary they are created and appointed by the government and have become mere agents of the government. To crown it all, the view argues that most Chiefs are uneducated and therefore unable to promote development in their areas (see Annex 3).

In Malawi, proponents of this argument, which comprise mostly of local government officials and DCs (100%), refused to see any positive role that Chiefs can play in the modern development administration arrangements. Apart from being ceremonial symbols of the past, Chiefs are seen as suffocating the development of new ideas and sets of values in order to maintain the status quo. They are seen as slow to respond to changes (Muva 2002, Gomani 2002, Kaunda 2002).

As regards people's respect for chiefs, proponents of the anti Chiefs view argue that this respect is decreasing due to several factors. Firstly they argue that Chiefs' authority is suppressive and egocentric (Muva 2003; Mtengule 2003). Secondly there are other modern institutions, which have taken over the traditional functions of chiefs. Local governments, councillors, police, the executive, legislature and judiciary have usurped the authority of chiefs. This loss of authority, they argue, is not new as it started with the concept of a 'nation'.

The argument goes on to say that chiefs themselves do not want to be recognised and elevated. It says efforts to elevate chiefs usually comes from the ruling party as a way of ensuring more grassroots support. Politicians realise that most of their support comes from the rural masses and mobilisation of rural communities is easier through chiefs. The ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) party constitution provided for decentralisation and the party stands to gain more votes if the authority of

chiefs is expanded.

However, the second view argues that it is not true that chiefs do not want to be elevated and recognised as an important link in development management. It says that officials of local government authorities wish to see Chiefs being striped of authority because that would work to their advantage (Kwilimbe 2004; Gomani 2003). This results from the power struggle between communities and the local government authorities.

Conflicts that arise between local government authorities and communities can be envisaged in the article that appeared in one of the local newspapers *The Nation* of 22 August 2002 (Annex 4). The article is about the conflict between a community and local government authorities on who has the power to install a chief in Traditional Authority Katumbi in Rumphi District in the north of the country. The community refused to recognise the chief installed by the president without their consent. In this case the local authorities were happy with the appointment by the President which they themselves suggested to him whilst the community saw the appointment as an imposition on them which would not act in the community's best interest.

The proponents of the view that chiefs are important for development comprise mostly of chiefs themselves, the Members of Parliament, MASAF officials and ordinary community members of TA Malili (see figure 3). Although 100% of local government officials disagreed, in terms of the total respondents 80% agreed that Chiefs are important as agents for mobilisation of communities for development. The latter argue that Chiefs remain even today an important direct link between central and local governments and the communities. They are better placed to mobilise

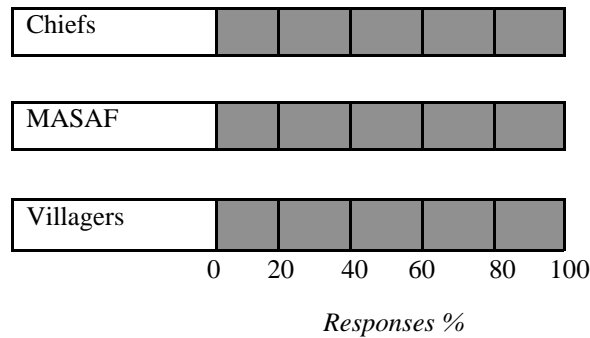
community participation in projects. This is obviously the stance that cabinet adopted when it proposed in the policy that Chiefs be made chairpersons of village development committees. By this act it showed that it realised and recognised the advantage that chiefs have over it in ensuring that the rural population take part in the efforts to develop their areas. Involvement of Paramount Chief Kaomba in the drafting and launching of an important national strategy such as the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper as shown in the article in *The Nation* of 22 April 2002, is evidence of this (see Annex 5).

Surprisingly though, contrary to their pattern of responses in the other questions, where as one third (31%) of local government officials (and none of the other categories) thought people did not respect the authority of Chiefs two thirds (67%) (and 100% of the other categories) strongly thought Chiefs are and will continue commanding considerable respect from their subjects for the foreseeable future. Perhaps this was only an acceptance of the reality on the ground on the part of local government officials, which however, did not contradict their majority stand (80%) that Chiefs are not important in today's development efforts (see figure 2) and should not be given greater authority in this respect. The general direction of government policy on Chiefs in Malawi nevertheless indicates an agreement with the perception that Chiefs are important for development.

Figure. 2: Responses to the question ‘Are Chiefs Important as Agents for Mobilisation of Community Participation in Development Projects?’ by category of respondents.

Category of Respondents





Key

Yes

No

One third of local government officers believed that chiefs do not have the know-how and skills to manage a democratic, politically and economically empowered people in this new dispensation (Muva 2002). Further, they argued that there is not enough justification for protecting this institution, which is one of the major causes of underdevelopment. It never fought for people’s rights, was and is still manipulated to infiltrate or justify some government inefficiencies in the community or conversely, even make government to look inadequate when so much is already done. Some argued that this is the case because Chiefs are one group of people no one dare sanction for inefficiency and misuse of human rights (Muva:2002). The other two thirds think these arguments are emotional and not based on the facts on the ground.

Firstly the argument that people would not dare sanction the Chiefs if they were not performing is contradicted by facts, which reveal that subjects have deposed their chiefs for non-performance. They argue that what those who say chiefs cannot be sanctioned actually mean is that the government is hard pressed to ensure that they install chiefs, who can then act as not more than government agents as argued earlier. However, irrespective of whatever means the chiefs are installed by, the argument is that there is

overwhelming evidence that Chiefs are important because they can do what the government on its own cannot do, that is mobilise communities. Even politically, Members of Parliament know that having the local Chief supporting an opposition party is a recipe for losing the by-elections because Chiefs are also taken as opinion leaders.

According to Chiefs in Malili, most Members of Parliament do not stay in their constituencies. Once they have been voted in they would rather stay in the big cities than continue to face the day-to-day hardships of rural life. As a result people do not feel members of parliament adequately represent them. On the other hand people usually heed the call by the Chief because he is the only authority close to them (Gomani 2004; Kwilimbe 2004; Holomisa 1999:1; Ray 1996:184-190). To them central and local government officials and members of parliament are phantoms that pay them visitations once in a blue moon.

Although two thirds of Local Government officials said that chiefs are important for mobilisation of participation of communities in development, the whole institution is unwilling to relinquish power to chiefs. Central Government on the other hand also seems unwilling to devolve fiscal authority to District Development Committees chaired by chiefs. The National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC) allows only 5% of Local Government revenue collection to be sent back to Local Government. Ultimately this is used mainly for administrative expenditures. Chiefs lament that it rarely trickles down to them and the communities.

Through the initiative of the President and his party, albeit for political mileage, against the apparent reluctance of Local Government officials,

respectable houses have been built for TAs and small monthly honoraria of K1, 500.00 (USD 18.52) for TAs and K78.00 (approx. USD1.00) for Group Village Headmen are paid. Village headmen are not paid anything. This does not go down well with Local Government officials who argued that government should not pay for inherited positions. Nevertheless, it is obvious that chiefs work more than MPs, councillors, and even DCs. This can be envisaged in the following case of MASAF.

6.6 Case Study: Role of Traditional Authorities in Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) Projects

6.6.1 What was MASAF designed to achieve?

Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) was established in 1995 as a new approach for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation and was financed by a US\$56 million credit from the World Bank's International Development Agency and counterpart funding of US\$2.9 million from the Government of Malawi (MASAF 2002:10). The MASAF programme, according to the Executive Director of the fund, is a deliberate attempt to circumvent the problems usually encountered by social programmes and to establish a more sustainable model (Kakhobwe: 2000).

Observation proves that many loans, credits and grants have been accessed over the years and many aid agencies are active in Malawi in key areas of health, education, training and private sector development. Yet the basic state of the rural poor changes very little and the problem remains very grave. Hunger, disease, illiteracy and simple lack of opportunity are common (Kakhobwe 2000; Manor 2004).

One problem in Malawi, indeed in most LDCs, is that aid money rarely

reaches the poor in sufficient proportions. Many aid agencies world-wide find it difficult to maximise the impact of aid funding so that their efforts actually benefit the poorest communities to achieve a measure of poverty alleviation. Organisations are often top-heavy and use a considerable proportion of their funding for overheads and equipment, or for training senior personnel (World Bank 2004; Schroeder 2000:425-427). Or the aid is given in a direct way in the form of food and clothing, which, although frequently vital, provides little future value, as the donated items are immediate consumables. Moreover the funding passes through many administrative stages, at each of which there is a possibility of administrative reduction through wastage.

A second problem is that decisions about projects are all too often made in government ministries or aid agency offices. These are then imposed on the people, resulting in the perception that they are government projects (Schroeder 2000:432). It is thus difficult for the community to have any sense of ownership of the project achievements.

MASAF's approach to poverty alleviation was to use small manageable physical projects to create new socio-economic capital for the communities in the medium to long term (MASAF 2000). It was expected that this would be achieved by enhancing the possibility for education, health and access to markets and services through the provision of suitable and simple physical infrastructure, which could assist this process.

Kakhobwe (2002) emphasised that the projects were approached in a "bottom-up" fashion so that communities identified, planned and implemented their own projects with assistance from higher agencies only where needed.

The basic aim of MASAF, according to the Project Concept Document for MASAF 1 (MASAF 1995:2), was to enhance the quality of life through community projects, which would ensure the provision of, or marked improvement of such physical infrastructure as local schools, clinics, water supplies, roads and bridges, and forestation. Its specific objectives were to ensure sustainable use of services targeted at the poor, vulnerable and marginalized social groups, promote direct involvement of communities in project preparation and management and transfer cash incomes through employment in labour intensive public works as a social safety net in targeted areas. According to available data, “1392 sub-projects were achieved throughout the country under the Community Sub-Projects section within 18 months of the start of MASAF 1. These were 735 education sub-projects, 49 health projects, 479 water projects, 120 bridges, five postal agencies, one market, one community hall and one road” (MASAF 2002: 22). The emphasis of MASAF on community participation requires further examination by reviewing the project management structure to see the extent of the role of traditional authorities in it. Figure 3 bellow presents the structure of MASAF projects management as presented by MASAF officials.

Figure. 3. Structure of Project Management in MASAF

F	MASAF Board	Approves Financing of Projects	
			I
	District Executive Committee	Approves and advises Board	N
A	MASAF Management Unit	Appraises projects	N

C	MASAF Zone Office	Appraises and monitors projects (assists communities)	I N
G	Project Maintenance Committee And Community members	Initiate, implement, monitor and maintain projects led by Chief	

Source: MASAF 2002

6.6.2 How participatory are MASAF projects and what is the role of Chiefs in them?

Of particular importance is the involvement of Chiefs in the Project Management Committee responsible for initiation, implementation, monitoring and maintenance of projects. According to MASAF Lilongwe Zone officers (2002), the number of projects implemented in any particular area depended not simply on population density, but also on the resourcefulness of the communities and their leaders. Chiefs and Members of Parliament had a responsibility to mobilise local awareness and encourage participation, as well as contributions of materials at the right time and in the right quantities. Only in a few cases did the project allow members of the committee to be appointed by Chiefs, otherwise members were democratically elected.

Before members were elected however, it was the responsibility of chiefs to convene meetings to sensitise communities and encourage them to realise their own needs. They discussed projects most needed to improve their well being, and decided which of these should be implemented and what priorities should be adopted. These local meetings were also used by MASAF and District Executive Committees, which provided technical support to advise each community through the chiefs that it would also be

required to contribute part of the cost, as one of the funding prerequisites. Contributions could consist of cash but usually it was labour or materials such as sand, stones, bricks and other materials to be used in the project. They were informed that MASAF could allocate funds only if the community contributed to the level of 20% for an infrastructure project and 5% for a water project and they also agreed to maintain the structures on their own through resource mobilisation (MASAF 2002:16). Community meetings were encouraged, to provide updates throughout the life of the projects and to promote a sense of ownership, accountability and transparency.

Chiefs in TA Malili and their subjects agreed that the task of mobilising communities was mainly the Chiefs' responsibility and MASAF officials were hard pressed to ensure that Chiefs played a central role in this regard otherwise it was difficult for them to attain the same level of mobilisation. But they also lamented that the projects they had planned for one village were eventually implemented in another village. They believed that this was due to political interference, which sidelined their constituency MP for being in the opposition political party and, by extension, all Chiefs in this constituency belonged to the opposition. These projects were two schools built in Mpingu and Nguluwe villages instead of the targeted Malili Village. One of the projects in Malili Village, which is another school, has not been completed since 1997 because the MASAF Zone officials (who confirmed this) borrowed materials for this project for another project, when the amount allocated for the school project could not be released in time. Although the materials had since been returned, in the face of rising inflation and devaluation of the local currency, the delays in funding required additional injection of capital, which, officials said, MASAF could not undertake. The community is still struggling to raise this additional

capital.

The Chiefs' task of mobilising communities for participation therefore, continued throughout the life cycle of the projects. Suffice it to say that this was probably the most crucial task of the project management because once communities were disgruntled it required enormous skills to convince them to continue with the work, something that chiefs appeared to have in abundance if they themselves were convinced.

The improvements in health and health care, education, access to schools and local and wider markets, as well as protection of the environment will have far-reaching implications for the socio-economic well being of all people in the community.

6.7 Concluding Remarks on Field Research

We have seen in this Chapter that from the pre-colonial period of Malawi's history Chiefs have largely played the role of leaders in every aspect of community development, a role that, as assigned by the Chiefs Act, has not changed from the 1967 provision. They have played the judiciary role of conflict resolution and administration of justice, executive role of directing action as absolute authority and the role of the legislature in moulding rules and regulations. In addition Chiefs have been instrumental in psychosocial counselling through their role as spiritual leaders. However, the most crucial of Chiefs' roles is the mobilisation of communities for inclusive decision-making and participation in development projects. This has been confirmed by the responses by all the categories of respondents except local government officials, which is understandable because they are in direct power struggle with the Chiefs. Even the success of MASAF projects and

the decentralisation policy itself is attributed to the meaningful involvement of Chiefs from initiation to implementation and evaluation of the projects.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS: INCREASING THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

7.1 Strategy for Development Partner Interventions in Malawi

The decentralisation policy strongly encourages development partners to adopt the bottom-up approach using the available decentralised structure to initiate and implement programs and projects.

First the District Commissioners (DCs) are expected to hold regular

meetings with development committees, which comprise all the relevant community representatives including Chiefs, to identify the priorities of the communities which they report to the central government. Conversely, village development committees are expected to regularly present their priority needs to the district commissioner through the ward councillors.

The DCs keep these priority needs until financial resources or partners are found and can be communicated to interested partners as they enter the community. Communities' priority needs also feed into the national policies because the district development committees comprise of officials from all the government ministries. This gives the ministries the opportunity to also monitor the needs of communities. The district development committees with Chiefs as ex-officio members meet once every month. This arrangement ensures firstly, response to community needs and secondly, effective community participation.

One can therefore, read from the decentralisation structure that, development partners who are interested to work at grassroots level are encouraged to enter the grassroots community through first meeting the DC's office. The role of the DC is to provide the partner with the information on the needs and priorities of the community from which the partner will choose the particular intervention that it is interested in. The DC will then guide development partners to the area where a particular intervention is particularly required. This will be a cluster of villages called a ward headed by a councillor. Here the Councillor, in liaison with the Parliamentarian of that constituency will further guide them to the specific Traditional Authority and village in which the proposed intervention is a priority need. At this level the local group village headman is the chairperson of the village development committee, which will initiate the

project in terms of stating exactly what they would want the project to be.

Where the partner organisation is not referred to the village development committee concerned, it has the duty to insist upon it. Alternatively, bearing in mind the power struggle between the local government officials and Chiefs, the organisation can talk directly to the Traditional Authority (TA). However, the former route is encouraged as the district officials have the responsibility to screen dubious from genuinely interested organisations and also to ensure that their objectives are in line with the broader national development goals.

As has been revealed in the case of Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) the communities can mobilise and organise themselves by identifying project management committee members such as treasurer, secretary and spokesperson. The role of staff of the development partner will then be monitoring of progress and offering advice when requested in collaboration with local government authorities. What is more, development partners may wish to provide training in specific technical aspects.

MASAF utilised Chiefs effectively in mobilising communities to participate in the socio-economic development projects it funded. Communities managed to mobilise 5 to 20% of the total cost of the projects. They created committees to manage the implementation of the projects, monitor the state of the physical structures so constructed and eventually maintain them. These are formidable tasks, which, for something communal, are not easy to achieve. However, credit must be given to the authority of Chiefs over their subjects and their abundant skills for mobilisation.

7.2 Strategy for Capacity Building at Traditional Authority Level

The argument that there are low levels of education in the rural communities being true, it is also apparent that skills that may be required will always be available or found or people can be trained for specific tasks.

There are growing numbers of unemployed young men educated enough to assist but who migrate to cities for greener pastures. If enough incentives are provided where mere gratification for working for one's community may not be enough incentive in itself, these young men can be utilized effectively. It is also disheartening to note that some institutions would not accept a professional civil servant that decides to assist in a project in his home area solely because it would be deemed to be nepotism. An area therefore, would be labeled as lacking in the necessary human resources to implement a particular project when the human resources are being under utilized or drained by the cities. One is inclined to believe that surely, if all the human resources that end up in the cities can be called to assist in the projects in their own rural communities, lack of human resources and technical know how would be a thing of the past.

As regards lack of education of Chiefs, training in basic administration may not be that difficult if the local language is used as medium of instruction. In addition Government may be encouraged to come up with a policy making basic education a must for Chiefs, so that communities are encouraged through legislation to select to Chieftainship only those people with basic education without necessarily diluting the hereditary aspects of it.

7.3 Strategy for Overcoming Cultural Obstacles

Decentralisation requires culture audit, and culture change. Any process of genuine development will also be a process of cultural change. A living culture is not a fossilised code, but responds to the changes in material, environmental and external circumstances, as well as evolves according to its own internal logic. This means that at a certain stage different cultural practices will need to be encouraged, while others will have to be modified, reinvented, or even overtaken because they would be considered obsolete. But this choice belongs to the community, not to the development partners.

7.4 Implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation System

The general principles and technical procedures of monitoring and evaluation are indeed well documented, but far less attention has been directed at the equally important process of field implementation in development settings. One essential principle has to be borne in mind by development managers when implementing development projects. This is to ensure there is a decentralisation element in the organisation of the monitoring and evaluation system. Localised monitoring will ensure solutions more sensitive to local socio-cultural problems. The field monitoring units would start by discussing the project with village headmen, traditional authorities and others. The backing of these grassroots authorities is invariably important as they wield unequalled authority in development issues. They would also be able to explain certain phenomena about the project's progress or lack thereof, which the field monitoring staff may not be able to notice.

There is a general lack of high-level manpower necessary for policy implementation. This refers to the scarcity of trained administrators, which

is the direct result of lack of proper manpower planning and assessment, which lead to poor government recruitment policies and ultimately chronic brain drain.

Government must use feedback from the communities and chiefs to design strategies aimed at examining the cultural practices and identify the cultural capital of the different communities in order to exploit the potential for economic development. Conversely, through this Government can also design strategies to discourage practices that are harmful to development.

All this calls for training at all the levels of responsibility from grassroots in order to orient responsible people's minds towards a culture of decentralization, which provides for the devolution of power and authority to be accountable to local communities. The training would also sensitize office bearers of their responsibility of involving all concerned especially the Chiefs before any new idea that affect communities is put into policy and action.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

This study began with the objectives to; discuss the linkages between development participation and culture; culture and chiefs as factors of development; importance of decentralisation in inclusive decision making; the role of social funds in community participation; report on the perceptions of people on the development role of traditional authorities as recorded in the field research; identify the critical rural development role of

Traditional Authorities in Malawi and; propose how development managers can utilise the decentralised public administration system to improve on the relevance of their interventions to the local communities by improving the involvement of chiefs in development projects.

By achieving these objectives the study has revealed that the single most crucial role of Chiefs, often taken for granted even in the face of decentralisation, is their ability to mobilise communities for participation in development work.

8.2 Development Role of Traditional Authorities in the Context of Decentralisation in Malawi

For any administrative system to have meaning to local people and to be sustainable it must either be rooted in its socio-cultural environment or must be reconciled with the national culture. In Malawi just as in many other countries the structural arrangement at grass roots level is such that the degree of social integration is very high in village communities and rural groups where the local administrative districts usually correspond exactly in size to the ethno-cultural groups themselves. This very fact gives the local Chiefs enough legitimacy over their subjects so that they are the first local authority to be made aware of the needs of the community. As one of their legitimate roles Chiefs are required to assist in the general administration of their areas. This and the natural authority they have, place them in the best position to mobilise their subjects towards participation in development projects in spite of claims by some authors to the contrary.

Several scholars have argued that Chiefs are not relevant in today's development processes mainly because Chieftainship emanates from a non-democratic hereditary tradition. However, the exercise of authority through a process of consultation with "spirits" (for lack of a better word), close

aids and the community at large makes this authority more democratic than is popularly believed.

Moreover, over the years, officials who felt that their power was being lessened suppressed the involvement of Chiefs in socio-economic development. The advent of the decentralization process has provided for the creation of structures that will give an opportunity for Chiefs to play a greater role in community mobilization for development work.

Whilst the fact that the role of Chiefs has not changed over the years coupled with the decentralisation process, may be regarded as positive, political factors such as power struggle between the local government and Chiefs and the local government and the central government can affect the performance of this role. Chiefs who were interviewed were vehement about not being consulted when the decentralisation process began hence they do not exactly feel part of the system. Central government is reluctant to give complete autonomy to local government, which in turn want to keep Chiefs on a “leash”. This situation is compounded by politicians such as members of parliament who use Chiefs for political gains through making inequitable promises for development aid to their followers leaving out those perceived as belonging to a rival party. Those Chiefs left out then do not feel obliged to participate in the development efforts whose origin was obviously a rival political figure.

It seems therefore; that the way decentralisation in Malawi is being implemented is such that it is more of a de-concentration of responsibilities than that of devolution of power and authority to local government and grassroots structures as an instrument for participation of communities in development work. Although Chiefs chair village development committees,

a position, which puts them at the centre of development effort, they complain that this is only ceremonial as most of their decisions are rarely implemented because they rely on the local government office for financial resources. The local government officers however, have different priorities to the needs of the community. Therein lies the danger of the process eventually leading to more localised despotic structures with responsibilities to the paternalistic central government than democratic autonomous structures whose responsibilities are to the local communities.

8.3 Fostering Popular Participation Through Traditional Authorities

Popular participation is the ideal goal for successful project implementation. However, due to problems associated with externally initiated and financed projects, most institutions have resorted to stakeholder participation. In stakeholder participation, sponsors and designers of development activities work through powerful stakeholders to serve the needs of the poorest people.

Whatever the nature of participation it may be, popular or stakeholder, in Malawi Chiefs are the main link between the poorest people and other stakeholders including officials in central and local governments. Due to problems of limited resources and poor accessibility, it may not be possible for sponsors, even in the case of popular participation initiatives that ignore TAs, to reach the poor directly. For the remotest communities the window of accessibility then becomes the Traditional Authorities that have an added privilege of moving between the rural and the urban areas as government agents. In stakeholder participation the most important stakeholder is the Traditional Authority that directly represents the people and understands

better the socio-cultural environment.

Indeed Chiefs have a crucial role in development administration in Malawi more so in the context of decentralisation. They can be depended upon to mobilise communities in rural areas to initiate and implement community development projects even with minimal supervision. MASAF project management approach, which centres on community ownership of projects and has registered enormous successes, is a case in proof of this.

8.4 Areas for Future Research

The issue of Chiefs as cultural obstacle and that of power and role distribution between Chiefs and local government authorities in view of decentralisation demand more research and policy debate if Chiefs are to be effectively utilised and for the decentralisation process to work effectively.

Development must be founded on the will of each society as well as on the expression of its profound identity. The culture of a society will only cease to constitute a set of unmanageable obstacles (and tools) for development when development is no longer defined in terms foreign to that society's identity and is seen instead as a process of endogenous change and interaction between societies, through which they may evolve in accord with their own identities, on their own terms. For TA Malili and the rest of Malawi this means recognising the lead role of Chiefs in all development efforts.

The struggle for supremacy between Chiefs and local government authorities has become more pronounced at the advent of decentralisation. Chiefs are at an advantage over local government in the sense that they are

guardians and embodiments of tradition and culture and they present a forum for the articulation, debate, resolution and defence of local interests. These factors give them an advantage over local government authorities who have to work more to attain the same level of acceptability of their authority over Chiefs despite that they have more financial resources than Chiefs.

However, Chiefs and local government authorities in Malawi need to work together for the betterment of the local communities. They must use their individual advantages to the mutual benefit of the development efforts. Therefore, a way must be found that fosters a mutually enriching relationship between these essential players in the decentralisation and development process.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Schedule of Research

Time Frame	Activity
April 2001– August 2002	Literature Review
September 2002	Administration of Questionnaires
September 2002	Interviews with Chiefs and Villagers
October – December 2002	Analysis of Data
January – September 2003	Writing of Thesis/Dissertation
October 2003	Submission of Chapter 1 to Supervisor
December 2003	Consideration of Supervisor’s Feedback
January 2004	Submission of Chapter 2 to Supervisor
February 2004	Consideration of Supervisor’s Feedback
March 2004	Submission of Chapter 3 to Supervisor
April 2004	Submission of Chapter 4 to Supervisor
July 2004	Submission of Chapter 5 and 6 to Supervisor
August 2004	Submission of Chapter 7 & 8 and Appendices to Supervisor
October 2004 – January 2005	Consideration of Supervisor’s Feedback
20 February 2005	Submission of Thesis/Dissertation for examination

Annexure 2: Tables Showing Analysis of Responses to Key Questions

After analyzing the responses to the questions during the piloting further division was made and fewer key questions identified that were common in all the three

categories of respondents as key questions for the whole study. The responses to these questions were divided into two main categories:

- 1 Those confirming the hypothesis that Chiefs have a greater role to play in development projects management identified in each table below by the value A and
- 2 Those disproving the hypothesis identified by the value B

Category	Question in Questionnaire	Total Number of Respondents in Category	Yes (A) Responses	No (B) Responses	Non Responses	% of Yes to Total Number of Respondents in Category	% To of Re in
*Local Government	21. i)	24	17	7	0	71 %	
Chiefs	26. i)	31	31	0	0	100 %	
Subjects	26. i)	60	53	7	0	88 %	
MASAF	14. i)	8	6	0	2	75 %	
TOTAL		123	107	14	2	87 %	

2.1 “Do you think Chiefs are still important today as agents for mobilization of community participation?”

2.2 “Do you think Chiefs are still important today as agents for tax collection?”

Category	Question in Questionnaire	Total Number of Respondents in Category	Yes (A) Responses	No (B) Responses	Non Responses	% of Yes to Total Number of Respondents in Category	% To of Re in
*Local Government	21. ii)	24	0	24	0	0 %	
Chiefs	26. ii)	31	0	31	0	0 %	

2.3 “Do you think Chiefs are still important today as agents for settling domestic disputes?”

Category	Question in Questionnaire	Total Number of Respondents in category	Yes (A) Responses	No (B) Responses	Non Responses	% of Yes to Total Number of Respondents in Category	% of Total Responses
*Local Government	21. iii)	24	12	12	0	50 %	
Chiefs	26. iii)	31	31	0	0	100 %	
Subjects	26. iii)	60	49	11	0	82 %	
MASAF	14. iii)	8	4	2	2	50 %	
TOTAL		123	96	25	2	78%	

2.4 “Do you think Chiefs are still important today as agents for settling community disputes?”

Category	Question in Questionnaire	Total Number of Respondents in category	Yes (A) Responses	No (B) Responses	Non Responses	% of Yes to Total Number of Respondents in Category	% of Total Responses
*Local Government	21. iv)	24	14	10	0	58 %	
Chiefs	26. iv)	31	31	0	0	100 %	
Subjects	26. iv)	60	49	11	0	82 %	
MASAF	14. iv)	8	5	1	2	61 %	
TOTAL		123	99	22	2	80 %	

2.5 “Do you think Chiefs are still important today as agents for custody of culture?”

Category	Question in Questionnaire	Total Number of	Yes (A) Responses	No (B) Responses	Non Responses	% of Yes to Total Number	% of Total Responses
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Category	Question in Questionnaire	Total Number of Respondents in category	Yes (A) Responses	No (B) Responses	Non Responses	% of Yes to Total Number of Respondents in Category	% of Total Responses
*Local Government	9	24	24	0	0	100 %	
Chiefs	27	31	4	27	0	12 %	
Subjects	27	60	0	60	0	0 %	100 %
TOTAL		115	28	87	0	24 %	

2.7 “At what level were Chiefs involved with MASAF Projects?”

Category	Question in Questionnaire	Total Number of Responses	Chiefs were only involved at Initiation of Project (A) 2	Chiefs were only involved at Implementation of Project (B) 3	Chiefs were involved throughout the Project (A) 4	% of column 2 to column 1 (A) 5	% of column 3 to column 1 (B) 6
*Local Government	23.	24	4	8	12	17 %	33 %
Chiefs	9.	31	4	7	20	12 %	23 %
Subjects	9.	60	4	0	56	6 %	0 %
MASAF	9.	8	0	0	8	0 %	0 %
TOTAL		123	12	15	96	10 %	12 %

2.8 Aggregate results of responses to all the seven key questions

Category	Total Responses	A responses (%)	B responses (%)	Null & void responses (%)
*Local Govt	168	107 (64%)	61 (36%)	0
Chiefs	217	152 (70%)	65 (30%)	0
Subjects	420	271(65%)	149 (35%)	0
MASAF	48	29 (60%)	11(23%)	8 (17%)

Annexure 3: Article from The Daily Times of 21 October 2002 on *Chiefs Education Vital for Development, says Muluzi*

Annexure 4: Article from *Daily Times* of 22 August 2002 on *Subjects Instal New Katumbi*

**Annexure 5: Article from *The Nation* of 22 April 2002 on Chief Deplores
Some Traditions**

Annexure 6: Sample of Questionnaires

**RESEARCH ON
THE DEVELOPMENT ROLE OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES IN
THE CONTEXT OF DECENTRALIZATION OF MALAWI**

CHRISTOPHER J MAGOMELO

P O BOX 30278

LILONGWE 3

01. SELF-RESPONSE QUESTIONNAIRE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

(Please respond only in enough words to explain your point)

This questionnaire is aimed at establishing the extent of the authority of chiefs over their community members as well as their role in the overall management of community projects in the context of the decentralization process taking place in Malawi. The purpose for the interview is part fulfillment of the requirements of a thesis for a Masters Degree in Development Studies, which I am pursuing with University of South Africa. Any related information that you can offer will be a great contribution to my thesis.

(Please respond only in enough words to explain your point)

Personal details

1. Name and address of respondent.....
2. Position of respondent

Decentralization and Local Government Secretariats

Mission of the secretariat

3. What is the mandate of the decentralization secretariat?.....
4. What factors led to the establishment of the decentralization policy? Mention not more than three:

a).....

b)
.....

c).....

Objectives and design of decentralization process

5. What are the objectives of decentralization in Malawi? Mention the most important not more than four.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

6. Mention the major levels in the proposed decentralization structure from central government down to grassroots level.

Level 1.....

Level 2.....

Level 3.....

Level 4.....

Level 5.....

Level 6.....

7. What will be the role of each level in the structure?

Level

1.....

Level 2.....

Level 3.....

Level 4.....

Level 5.....

Level 6.....

8. What responsibilities does the structure give to chiefs

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

9. Were the chiefs consulted when the policy was being proposed?

If yes, state how:

.....

If not, give a reason:.....

Decentralization and project management

10. What does the policy propose to be the approach for starting a project? Tick the appropriate space.

10.1 Projects must be started by officials at the top and then sold to people in

the community for their support.....

What reasons dose it give for this? Mention not more than two:

i).....

ii).....

10.2 Projects must be started by the communities themselves and then sold to the officials at the top for their support.....

What reasons dose it give for this? Mention not more than two:

i).....

ii).....

11. What does the policy propose as the entry point for community development projects by external development institutions?.....

Give not more than two reasons for this:

i).....

ii).....

Advantages of decentralization

12. What do you see as the advantages of decentralization particularly in Malawi?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

Disadvantages of decentralization

13. What do you see as the disadvantages of decentralization particularly in Malawi?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

14. What factors will lead to the success or failure of decentralization in Malawi?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

15. Do you think chiefs are important/unimportant for development? Yes...No.....

Give reasons:

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

16. Do people nowadays respect the authority of chiefs? Yes.....No.....

17. If not what are some of the reasons?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

18. If not can we say that the authority of chiefs these days has been destroyed hence we should not depend on them to lead in development work?
.....

19. In spite of your answers to the above questions do you think chiefs are still important for development? Yes.....No.....

20. What are some of the roles that chiefs used to play traditionally? Mention not more than five:

- i).....
- ii).....
- iii).....
- iv).....
- v)

21. Do you think chiefs are still important today as agents for:

- i) Mobilization of Communities Participation Yes.....No.....
- ii) Tax Collection Yes.....No.....
- iii) Settling Domestic Disputes Yes.....No.....
- iv) Settling Community Disputes Yes.....No.....
- v) Custody of culture Yes.....No.....

22. Do you think chiefs must be given more authority to make decisions than they have? Yes.....No.....

Explain.....

23. At what level were Chiefs and subjects involved with MASAF projects?
.....

02. STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: CHIEFS AND SUBJECTS

(Please respond only in enough words to explain your point)

The questions that I am going to ask you are aimed at establishing the extent of the authority of chiefs over their community members as well as your role in the overall management of community projects. The purpose of the interview is part

fulfillment of the requirements of a thesis for a Masters Degree in Development Studies, which I am pursuing with the University of South Africa. Any information that you can offer will be a great contribution to my thesis.

Scope of authority

1. Name and address of respondent.....
2. Name of District.....
3. Area/village covered by Chieftainship.....
4. How is the chief chosen. a) appointment by.....b) inheritance.....

Knowledge of and experience with MASAF Project

5. Do you know the existence of MASAF project? a) yes b) no.....
6. At the beginning of MASAF were you consulted? a) yes b) no
7. Give one example of a MASAF funded project?
8. Have you participated in it? a) yesb) no
9. If your answer to the above question is yes, at what point/level were you involved?
 - a) at project planning level ie.....
 - b) At project implementation level
ie.....
10. What were the results of this project? Mention not more than three:
 - i).....
 - ii).....
 - iii).....
11. Were results achieved the same as those planned? Yes.....No.....

What were the planed results?

 - i).....
 - ii).....
 - iii).....

Sustainability of projects

12. What were some of the problems that the project faced? Mention not more than three:

- i).....
- ii).....
- iii).....

13. Did the community solve them, if so how?

.....

14. What in your view were the strengths of the project? Mention not more than three:

- i).....
- ii).....
- iii).....

15. Do you think the project will continue after MASAF stopped assisting?

Yes.....No....

Give not more than three reasons:

i)

.....

ii).....

iii).....

15. Do people in your village respect the chief's authority? Yes..... No.....

23. If not what are some of the reasons?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

24. If not can we say that the authority of chiefs these days has been destroyed hence we should not depend on them to lead in development work?

.....

25. What are some of the roles that chiefs used to play traditionally? Mention not more than five:

i).....

- ii).....
- iii).....
- iv).....
- v)
-

26. Do you think chiefs are still important today as agents for:

- i) Mobilization of Communities Participation Yes.....No.....
- ii) Tax Collection Yes.....No.....
- iii) Settling Domestic Disputes Yes.....No.....
- iv) Settling Community Disputes Yes.....No.....
- v) Custody of culture Yes.....No.....

27. Are you aware of the government's decentralization policy?

Yes.....No.....

28. If yes, do you think it is a good policy? Yes.....No.....

Explain.....

29. Do you think chiefs must be given more authority than what they have at the moment? Yes.....No.....

Explain.....

03. SELF RESPONSE QUESTIONNAIRE: MASAF SECRETARIAT

(Please respond only in enough words to explain your point)

This questionnaire is aimed at establishing the extent of the authority of chiefs over their community members as well as their role in the overall management of community projects. The purpose for the interview is part fulfillment of the requirements of a thesis for a Masters Degree in Development Studies, which I am pursuing with University of South Africa. Any related information that you can offer will be a great contribution to my thesis.

Personal details

1. Name and address of respondent.....
2. Position of respondent

Importance of MASAF

3. Why was MASAF created?.....
4. What are the objectives of MASAF?
 - a).....
 - b).....
 - c).....
5. What, if any, is the basic principle behind MASAF?
.....

Are MASAF Projects participatory or not?

6. What categories of projects is MASAF involved in?.....
7. Who originates the project ideas?.....
8. What is the procedure for identification, selection, funding and implementation of projects?.....
9. At what level were chiefs and subjects involved in the implementation of MASAF projects?.....
10. Is the authority of chiefs recognized in the whole process of project implementation? If so, how?
11. If not what are some of the reasons?
 - i).....
 - ii).....
 - iii).....
12. If not can we say that the authority of chiefs these days has been destroyed hence we should not depend on them to lead in development work?
.....
13. What are some of the roles that chiefs used to play traditionally? Mention not more than five:
 - i).....

- ii).....
- iii).....
- iv).....
- v).....

14. Do you think chiefs are still important today as agents for:

- i) Mobilization of Communities Participation Yes.....No.....
- ii) Tax Collection Yes.....No.....
- iii) Settling Domestic Disputes Yes.....No.....
- iv) Settling Community Disputes Yes.....No.....
- v) Custody of culture Yes.....No.....

15. Overall, MASAF has been a a) success story b) failure.....

16. What factors do you think led to MASAF's success or failure?

- a).....
- b).....
- c).....

17. What evidence can you identify that shows the success or failure of MASAF?

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