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ABSTRACT

ONE PURPOSE, MULTIPLE REALITIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY
ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TWO MALAWIAN
PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

Josephine Katenga

Chair: Larry D. Burton

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: ONE PURPOSE, MULTIPLE REALITIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TWO MALAWIAN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Name and degree of faculty chair: Larry D. Burton, Ph.D.

Date completed: March 2017

Problem

Studies of Parental Involvement at the secondary school level have consistently shown to improve student-learning outcomes. Parents who invest money in children's education want to see their children matriculate to higher education. Unfortunately, many private schools offer poor quality education. Students' achievement in Malawi secondary schools requires the participation of each stakeholder. The purpose of this study therefore was threefold: to explore the nature of Parental Involvement in children's education, to determine types of involvement, and to examine parents' and educators' attitudes towards Parental Involvement. The study participants came from two Malawian private secondary schools in Africa.

Method

This study used a descriptive multisite case study design, a qualitative approach for gathering information from 90 participants comprised of three proprietors, six administrators, 19 teachers and 62 parents. Data collection methods included interviews, focus groups, observation, open-ended questionnaires and document analysis. Grounded theory, an inductive methodology that uses constant comparative data analysis process, was used to make generalizations and discover emergent themes from the data. Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted to explore similarities and differences across the cases.

Results

The cross-case analysis portrayed a package of contrasting ideologies held by proprietors, educators and parents which formed the bedrock of the type of partnership that existed between parents and educators. These ideological influences resulted in the formation of perspectives and attitudes, which in turn translated into participants' practices. However, because of their position and ideological dispositions, the proprietors exerted greater influence on the type of Parental Involvement model, policies and practices at the schools. While in one school, the educators held a deficit thinking ideology against parents resulting in implementing an Alienation Parental Involvement model, the other school valued parents' contributions and sought to collaborate with them, thus it implemented an Alliance Parental Involvement Model.

In addition, data analysis indicated that all parents in this study were involved in their children's education at different levels. Academic socialization (discussions pertaining to children's schooling experiences and conversations about parents'

aspirations and expectations) was the most significant home-based Parental Involvement strategy. A significant but not surprising finding was the dissimilar influences of education and traditional values on parents' support of their girls.

Notwithstanding, the evidence also suggests that some parents considered their financial investment as the most meaningful involvement in children's education because secondary education in Malawi is not free.

Conclusions

From the data analysis, a theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi was developed. This theory contributes to literature and provides an analytical framework for viewing Parental Involvement in private schools in Malawi. In addition, recommendations have been developed from this study with the intention of improving Parental Involvement in the two private secondary schools. Further studies however, are recommended to determine whether the findings and the theory apply to other environments in Malawi.

Andrews University

School of Education

ONE PURPOSE, MULTIPLE REALITIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY
ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TWO MALAWIAN
PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Josephine Katenga

March 2017

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACEM	Association of Christian Educators in Malawi
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
Balala	Balala Educational Institution
CDSS	Community Day Secondary Schools
CRECCOM	Creative Centre for Community Mobilization
CSS	Conventional Secondary Schools
DEC	Distance Education Center
DFID	Department for International Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FPE	Free Primary Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IRB	Institutional Review Board
ISAMA	Independent Schools Association of Malawi
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
Kampango	Kampango Educational Institution
KIND	Kids in Need of Desks
MANEB	Malawi National Examination Board
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education
MCE	Malawi Certificate of Education

MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
MoGCDW	Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability, & Social Welfare
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Examination
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PEPFAR	President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PI	Parental Involvement
PRISAM	Private Schools Association of Malawi
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
RTI	Response to Intervention
SES	Socioeconomic status
SMC	School Management Committee
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations
UNFPA	United Nations Fund Population
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNIMA	University of Malawi
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Parental Involvement has been indicated as a significant variable for improving student-learning outcomes. The evidence from many studies conducted over the past four decades have shown without doubt that Parental Involvement is important to all students (Carter, 2002; Edelman, 2013; Jeynes, 2003; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Early studies provide strong evidence on the benefits of Parental Involvement in children's education at the elementary level (Clark, 1993; Comer, 1988; Gillum, 1977; Ho & Willms, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Olmsted, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Studies conducted in the last 25 years have confirmed that some forms of Parental Involvement are effective in high school and during the transition years to college (Edelman, 2013; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Marshall & Jackman, 2015; Murphy, 2012; Wimberly & Noeth, 2004).

Parents are the first teachers for children and have the power to influence the attitude of children towards lifelong learning (Adams & Singh, 1998; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Henderson, 1988; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). In addition, a meta-analysis of multiple Parental Involvement studies by Henderson and Berla (1994) confirmed the significance of Parental Involvement in producing higher grades, higher reading achievement, higher graduation rates, positive attitudes towards

school and lower dropout rates at all levels including high school.

Parental Involvement in High School

Parental Involvement during high school has been associated with better academic achievement (Catsambis, 1998, 2001; Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Deslandes & Royer, 1997; Engle, 1989; Henderson, Mapp, & Averett, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997a, 1997b; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005; Jeynes, 2005a, 2007; Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum, & Aubey, 1986; Lopez, 2001). Parental Involvement also impacts high school learning specifically in the following areas: homework habits (Cooper, Lindsay, & Nye, 2000; Ho & Willms, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Keith et al., 1998; LaBahn, 1995; Van Voorhis, 2001), dropout rates and school attendance (Cotton & Wiklund, 1989; Simon, 2001), and motivation for learning (Chowa, Masa, & Tucker, 2013; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Gonzalez, 2002).

Although previous studies indicated that Parental Involvement diminishes as the child grows older (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1991; Ritter, Mont-Reynaud, & Dornbusch, 1993; Stouffer, 1992), studies in the last decade have shown that parents' participation in children's education does not diminish during the teenage years, it simply takes on different forms (Catsambis, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2007; Patrikakou, 2008). A variety of issues may contribute to the seeming lack of parental participation in high school. The complexity of the curriculum is often beyond the parents' capacity to help their child, especially if the parents have little education (Dixon, 1992). The presence of many subject teachers, unlike the one-teacher classrooms in elementary school, is daunting. Even the communication process at the secondary school differs from the face-

to-face parent-teacher conferences in elementary school (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Students' psychological development is the most important reason for the decline in Parental Involvement as children grow older. Adolescence is a period of transition (Steinberg, 2002). It is marked by "conflict with guardians, mood disruptions, and risk behavior" (Hall, 1904, cited by Arnett, 1999, p. 317), identity crises, and role confusion (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). The manifestations of these behaviors are a result of hormonal changes and the development of faculties. During this period, many adolescents become egocentric and focus on their emotions. While seeking autonomy and independence, adolescents reject parents' authority to regulate their behavior (Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006; Tilton-Weaver & Marshall, 2008). Parent-adolescent interaction and relationship takes on different patterns. Adolescents perceive parents' instructions on behavior and monitoring of their whereabouts as intrusion of privacy. Arguments about parents' regulations and their rights often result in conflicts (Brown & Klute, 2003; Smetana et al., 2006).

Sometimes conflicts at home drive the adolescents to interact and confide with their peers (Granic, Dishion & Hollenstein, 2003; Monck, 1991) whom they perceive as understanding and supportive (Bornstein, Jager, & Steinberg, 2013; Freeman & Brown, 2001). Many youths make friends with those who have similar likes and dislikes. Because of peer pressure, these friends often influence an adolescent's behavior to the displeasure of their parents (Bornstein et al., 2013; Brown & Klute, 2003; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). Some parents perceive the seeking of autonomy and the formation of peer relationships as rejection of their values. Xu (2002) provides a reason why youths

want autonomy. He suggests that adolescents do not refuse their parents' involvement, but they have preferences and get involved in activities that their parents cannot participate in.

Despite spending more time with peers, adolescents still desire parental guidance (Cooper et al., 2000; Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte, & Bertrand, 1997; Keith et al., 1986; Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Studies show that adolescents vacillate between wanting their parents to take on interest in their education and wanting their privacy (Nebel-Schwalm, 2006; Xu, 2002). Xu (2002) believes the inconsistencies are a result of the developmental crisis adolescents' face. However, there is strong evidence that adolescents tend to rely on teachers for academic achievement and believe the school is a determinant of their success (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Parents, on the other hand, continue to negotiate for involvement in their children's lives. They want to ensure that their children are doing well socially and academically. In affirming this viewpoint, Granic et al. (2003) state, "Parents are often concerned about the social niche in which their children participate. . . . They compete for opportunities to have their child on the 'best soccer team,' enroll them in private schools and become involved in various organizations" (pp. 61-62).

Two Categories of Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement falls into two categories: school and home involvement. School level Parental Involvement gives opportunity for parents to get involved in parent-teacher conferences, and decision-making processes in parent-teacher associations (PTA). Other roles include volunteering as substitute teachers or taking on responsibilities assigned by the school (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In some instances, parents and

communities have been involved in education by providing infrastructure. Writing about parent's participation in education in Gambia, Colley (2005) states,

Family and community involvement in the education of children is seen as a plural multifaceted activity. For instance, the building of a school is a major community event. . . . Through the local leaders, families are asked to provide accommodation for teachers. (p. 38)

As important as school involvement is, studies have confirmed home involvement is more significant for impacting high school students' learning than Parental Involvement at school (Henderson et al., 2002; Trusty, 1999). In addition, studies conclude that the home environment is essential for determining children's success (Biedinger, 2011; Cotton & Wikeland, 1989; Henderson et al., 2002). The most important elements of home involvement for motivating high school students to do well in school include the parents' discussions of school-related issues (Jeynes, 2005b), monitoring after school activities and assisting with homework (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Wimberly & Noeth, 2004) and helping children understand parents' educational expectations and aspirations for them (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Fan, 2001; Hill et al., 2004; Hong & Ho, 2005; Patrikakou, 2004; Perkins, 2008). However, some studies indicate that in the developing countries the school environment affects students' outcomes more than Parental Involvement (Van der Werf, Creemers, & Guldmond, 2001) because many of the parents are semi-literate.

Parental Involvement differs from culture to culture and it is practiced by parents of different economic status (Henderson et al., 2002; Lam, Ho, & Wong 2002; Lopez, 2001). Parents in some countries go into financial debt to ensure that their children get an education. They believe that children should reach educational standards beyond their parents' achievements (Adeyemo, 2001; Sharma, 2013). Although most parents have

great aspirations for their children, they do not know how to academically translate their desires into assisting the children to do better in school (Adams & Singh, 1998). Findings of a study conducted in Mangochi District, Malawi, concluded that parents were willing to get involved at the school but their participation was hampered by their own inadequate education (Hyde, Kadzamira, Sichinga, Chibwana, & Ridker, 1996).

Parental Involvement in the Malawi School System

Structure of Secondary Schools in Malawi

The present Malawi education system is based on an 8-4-4 structure (eight years of primary school, four years of secondary school and four years of higher education). Students take the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) at the end of primary school. The secondary school system has two cycles. The first cycle includes Form 1 and 2 (Grades 9 and 10) and culminates with the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) examination. Those who pass the JCE enter the second cycle which includes Form 3 and 4 (Grades 11 and 12). At the end of the four years of secondary school, students sit for a final secondary exit national examination, the Malawi Certificate of Education (MCE) examination. All national examinations at the primary and secondary level are developed and administered by the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB).

Types of Malawi Secondary Schools

Malawi has two main categories of secondary schools: public schools which are assisted by the government and private schools. The public schools comprise:

1. Government-funded conventional secondary schools (CSS), which include government day secondary schools and government boarding secondary schools

2. Open schools that use government schools' facilities in the afternoons and evenings to serve students who were once in school and need to return to school
3. Grant-aided schools operated by church organizations that receive partial funding from the government; and
4. Community day secondary schools (CDSS) operated by various communities in Malawi that receive some funding for teaching resources (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations [UNESCO], 2011; World Bank, 2010).

The private schools are operated by individuals and organizations that are not recipients of government support.

During the colonial years, Malawi's secondary school system consisted of a few schools run by Christian missionaries; however, after independence in 1964, the Malawi government took control of the secondary school system with its 3000 students. By 2004, the public-school system under the government included 35 boarding secondary schools, 59 day secondary schools and 16 open schools. In addition, the government partially assisted 561 CDSS and 63 grant-aided schools. Furthermore, the education system also had 233 private secondary schools (Education Management Information System [EMIS], 2004) (see Table 1).

Malawi School System Challenges

The Malawi education system has faced two critical challenges: inadequate secondary school places and provision of quality education in some of the schools. These problems were exacerbated by the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the abolition of school fees at the primary school level in 1994. Numerous children entered the school system. The average teacher-student ratio in many rural classrooms

Table 1

Provision of Secondary Education by Different School Types

School Type	Number of Schools 2004	% of Students Enrolled	Number of Schools 2008
Public Schools			
Government Boarding	35	9	43
Government Day	59	11	48
Open Schools	16	1	64
CDSS	561	46	543
Grant-Aided	63	9	158
Private Schools	233	24	159

Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) and EMIS (2004, 2013).

at that time reached 1:100. After recruiting 22,000 untrained teachers who were provided with a two-week orientation, the teacher-student ratio dropped to 1:65 in rural areas and 1:46 in the cities by the end of that decade (UNESCO, 2011). Eight years later the education system was challenged with a lack of places because of the influx of students into secondary schools. Although free primary education (FPE) improved access to elementary education, no dramatic change to alleviate the problem of inadequate secondary places occurred a decade after UPE.

Completion of primary school does not warrant entry into secondary school because exit examinations contribute to the lack of access into secondary schools. Although the purpose of national examinations is to measure students' performance and recognize their achievement, the national examinations in Malawi serve as sieves to reduce the number of students eligible for promotion to a higher level of education. For example, in 2005 the secondary school capacity was only 25% (World Bank, 2010) and in 2007, "a total of 161,567 learners [primary students] took the Primary School Leaving Certificate of Examination, 115,670 passed but only 39,596 (34%), were allocated places

in government and grant-aided secondary schools” (Kazima & Mussa, 2011, p. 164). Chakwera, Khembo, and Sireci (2004) maintain that the high-stakes exams have a “‘gate-keeping’ role in the system” (p. 9), permitting only a few academically competent students to move on to the limited government boarding and day secondary school places (De Hoop, 2011).

The government instituted measures to alleviate the burden of access to secondary schools and allowed individuals and non-governmental organization (NGO) to establish private secondary schools, which were often very expensive (Lewin & Sayed, 2005). In support of their children, parents whose children were not selected to the government secondary schools sought other alternatives. The most plausible support was to provide infrastructure and educational resources for their education. In their communities, parents rallied together and raised funds to build Distance Education Centers (DEC) where their children could be supervised as they received academic instruction through radio from the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE), a correspondence college. These DEC were later converted to CDSS (Laymaman, 1999; Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

Community Day Secondary Schools

Established in 1965 as a correspondence college under the Ministry of Education (MoE), Malawi Correspondence College provided education for home-study students and those studying at the DEC who had failed to enter government secondary schools (Laymaman, 1999). Because of the influx of students into the primary schools as a result of FPE, by the year 1998, the number of students enrolled in these centers was more than the total number of students in the public secondary school system (see Table 2). Even though the government took over the Distance College to stabilize the Malawi

Table 2

Enrollment Levels at Community Day Secondary Schools

Type of Secondary Schools		2004	2012
Public	CDSS	83,492	126,390
	Conventional	36,051	40,721
	Grant-Aided	16,322	40,717
	Open School	1,957	13,974
Subtotal		137,822	221,802
Private			38,262
Total		180,157	260,064

Note. Adapted from EMIS data from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (2004, 2013).

education system and changed the name from DEC to CDSS, it only allotted 15% of the funds allocated to public schools to fund teachers' salaries and teaching resources (Kayuni, 2010; Nellerman et al., 2004; UNESCO, 2011), which was inadequate for the large classes. The average teacher-student ratio was 1:81 (Ng'ambi, 2011).

The CDSS had many challenges. The schools were populated with primary school teachers unqualified to teach secondary school curriculum (Laymaman, 1999; Malawi Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology [MoEST], 2008; World Economic Forum, 2015). By 2009, the CDSSs had 81% unqualified teachers compared to 27% unqualified teachers in CSS (World Bank, 2009). In addition, CDSSs had inadequate classrooms, insufficient teaching and learning materials; a shortage of science facilities, libraries, and other instruction equipment (De Hoop, 2011; Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2007; Lewin & Sayed, 2005; Ng'ambi, 2011; UNESCO, 2011). The poor learning environment affected the outcomes of education. Hardly any students matriculated to college from these schools. In addition, dropout and repetition rates were high (World Education Forum, 2000). This educational environment affected parents who wanted to see their

children succeed. Some middle-class parents engaged tutors to help their children, while poor parents failed to support their children or lacked competence in tutoring their children.

Even though parents have been involved in their children's education by ensuring their children have access to secondary education, they are unsure their children can succeed in these CDSSs because of the low quality of education. Parents, who want to avoid this milieu, encourage their children to repeat Grade 8 to increase their chances of getting into government secondary schools (Kadzamira & Nell, 2004), which have better transition rates to college. Furthermore, parents realize that the cost of not educating their children outweighs their investments and are willing to spend their hard-earned income on private schools to ensure their children attain academic performance. Passing the Malawi School Certificate of Examination (MSCE) enables them to get selected into the limited college spaces (see Table 3). Literature suggests that parents choose schools out of necessity and often these schools are chosen to increase children's opportunity to succeed (Chen, 2012; Coulson, 2011).

Private Secondary Schools

Private secondary schools for expatriates existed in Malawi in the 1960s and were administered by the Designated School Board. The excessive need for more secondary school places after UPE compelled the government to permit individuals and organizations to operate schools (Rose, 2010). Most of the private secondary schools were under the umbrella of the Private School Association of Malawi (PRISAM) (Ng'ambi, 2011). This organization was replaced by the Independent Schools Association of Malawi (ISAMA). Some proprietors are truly interested in providing education and

Table 3

MSCE Pass Rates and University Intake (Education Statistics, 2007)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total Pupils Entered for MSCE Exam	65,644	59,080	65,650	81,362	78,524
Total Pupils Passed MSCE Exam	18,766	20,548	26,915	35,235	30,510
Total Pass Rates at MSCE	28.59%	34.78%	41%	43.31%	38.85%
University First-Year Enrollment	4565	5,062	6,478	6,835	6,346

Note. Adapted from *The Development of Education: National Report of Malawi* (MoEST & UNESCO, 2008).

they register their schools with the government. Others focus on profit-making and they operate under private business licenses (De Hoop, 2011; Lincove, 2007). Quality assurance is lacking in private schools because of lack of resources, the Ministry does not have the capacity for inspection and regulation.

Both government-registered private schools and those registered as private businesses rarely conform to government standards (Lewin & Sayed, 2005) with dire consequences. Just like the CDSSs, the private schools have inadequate teaching and learning materials. Also, the mandated government teacher-student of ratio 1:40 is ignored; instead the teacher-student ratio is higher. For example, Kampango Private Secondary School boasted of having 1:80 teacher-student ratios for each of the three streams for Form 3. Unqualified teachers are used to teach secondary-school material. In Lewin and Sayed's (2005) study, one of their participants expressed his misgivings concerning private schools.

Many students in non-government schools are facing problems which affect their studies, spoil their chances of going to university and even deny them their rights. Imagine, an MSCE holder teaching Form 4! These teachers cannot express themselves and share what they know. (p. 76)

Notwithstanding the status of many private schools in Malawi, proprietors are working to address quality issues, without the lack of which would spell low enrollment rates that affect their budgets. Schools, such as the two in this study, have qualified teachers and are seeing examination pass rates comparable to government schools' pass rates.

In addition, while government schools are solely administered by MoEST (2008), private schools depend on parents' support for financial liquidity. This provides the possibility of forging relationships between the educators and parents who send their children to the private schools with the desire for better learning outcomes equivalent to the high school fees they spend on their children's education. Parents would like to see returns on their investments in education in the form of children going for further studies. While the Malawi education system structure and challenges have compelled parents to make critical decisions pertaining to their children's educational futures and to get involved in seeking educational solutions in their communities to ensure their children have access to secondary education (Laymaman, 1999; Lewin & Sayed, 2005), at what level would parents support their children's education in private secondary schools?

The Problem

Parents desiring formal education for their children have tirelessly constructed schools in close proximity to their villages to reduce the distances the children have to walk to obtain an education. Parents have joined PTA, participated in decision-making in school councils and developed ways to increase community school infrastructure and educational resources (Burde, 2004). It is not unusual to see full communities, women and men, come out to assist at the school construction site.

However, parents are not satisfied with only providing elementary education to their children; they want them to attain secondary education as well. With the premise that education is a determinant of economic status and results in breaking the poverty cycle, parents believe that sending their children to secondary school is a path to white-collar employment. Despite their effort to increase accessibility to education in almost all the communities in Malawi, the need to improve the learning environment and the quality of education in Malawi is still apparent (World Bank, 2010). Teachers alone cannot adequately ensure that all students, especially day scholars, pass secondary school examinations. Day scholars are worse off because they do not benefit from the services given to boarders such as access to teachers after class hours, evening study periods, and library resources available at school. Succeeding in secondary schools requires a variety of strategies for assisting children to improve their performance.

The involvement of parents in private secondary schools is therefore critical to better educational outcomes. Vygotsky and Luria's (1994) social cognitive theory stresses the importance of social factors that influence children's development. Parents' and teachers' relationships with children provide children with self-regulation and stimulus for learning. Therefore, instead of delegating all formal education to teachers, parents' involvement in monitoring children's academic progress and assisting with homework helps in improving academic outcomes. However, literature shows that educators often do not welcome parents' participation in direct children academic support as this is considered the teachers' responsibility (Marphatia, Edge, Legault, & Archer, 2010; Swap, 1993). In some cases, parents believe they do not have the capacity for helping their children academically (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002).

Therefore, since parents' concern is to ensure their children succeed in school, how are parents involved? What is their understanding of their involvement in private secondary schools? And, how do educators view parents' efforts to support their children's education?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to describe, analyze, and evaluate the nature of Parental Involvement in education in Malawi private schools in order: a) to analyze the complex dynamics of Parental Involvement in students' education in Malawi private secondary schools, b) to understand the types of involvement that exist, and c) to examine parents' and educators' attitude towards Parental Involvement in children's schools.

Research Questions

1. In what ways are parents involved with their children at the school and at home?
2. What are the enablers and barriers to Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools?
3. What are the attitudes of educators towards Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools?
4. How does the relationship between the school personnel and the parents define the parents' role in Malawian private secondary schools?

Significance of Study

A variety of studies in the developed world have shown the significance of

Parental Involvement in schools (Henderson & Berla, 1994) and the importance of parents and school partnerships (Epstein, Sanders, & Sheldon, 2009; Hornby, 2011). Educational policy makers, curriculum developers, and school psychologists are increasingly encouraging schools to involve parents (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Staff development and training is implemented to promote effective partnerships between schools and parents because the resulting benefits for students have been shown to be effective. It is imperative that schools that have focused on the teachers as the sole dispensers of knowledge examine how to involve parents in assisting students to achieve their aspirations—obtaining an education that would make them effective citizens.

The findings of this study will provide information that will help stimulate a greater awareness of Parental Involvement in schools. Parents who participated in the study will have a better understanding of Parental Involvement from examples of participation penned in the study. Hence, Parental Involvement would benefit students resulting in positive attitudes toward education, better study habits, reduced truancy, and improved academic results.

The types of Parental Involvement portrayed in this study could lead to discussions between schooling agents (proprietors, and their administrators, teachers and parents) on how to implement or improve Parental Involvement. Private secondary schools that have already implemented Parental Involvement will use these findings and recommendations to develop interventions directed towards extending the functions of their Parental Involvement programs. The findings may provide private school proprietors the evidence for developing policies that would effectively establish

partnerships between schools and parents. In addition, findings from the case studies will provide government policy-makers with information for developing Parental Involvement policies and potential variable strategies for increasing student educational outcomes in Malawi.

Although it is common knowledge that parents and communities in Third World countries participate in PTA and many parents contribute to school construction to improve access, little has been researched in Malawi on Parental Involvement as a variable in increasing students' academic outcomes (Hyde et al., 1996) at the secondary school level. I hope that this study will contribute other Parental Involvement constructs from a cultural perspective. Furthermore, this study provides a lens into the use of grounded theory methodology for generating theory out of the research data.

Conceptual Framework

The Multifaceted Nature of Parental Involvement

According to Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, and Walberg (2005), Parental Involvement is a multifaceted concept involving a variety of factors that affect and influence it (see Figure 1). Each dimension is independent yet interdependent because factors and complications in each dimension allow or inhibit Parental Involvement in schools. In order to understand this complexity, I studied five social constructs and theories that had the potential to “facilitate the interpretations of findings” (Birks & Mills, 2011) and to explore the types of Parental Involvement that exist in Malawi (see Figure 2). These constructs were the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979); the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence advanced by Epstein's (1995); the Cultural Capital Theory espoused by Bourdieu (1986); the Social Capital Theory by

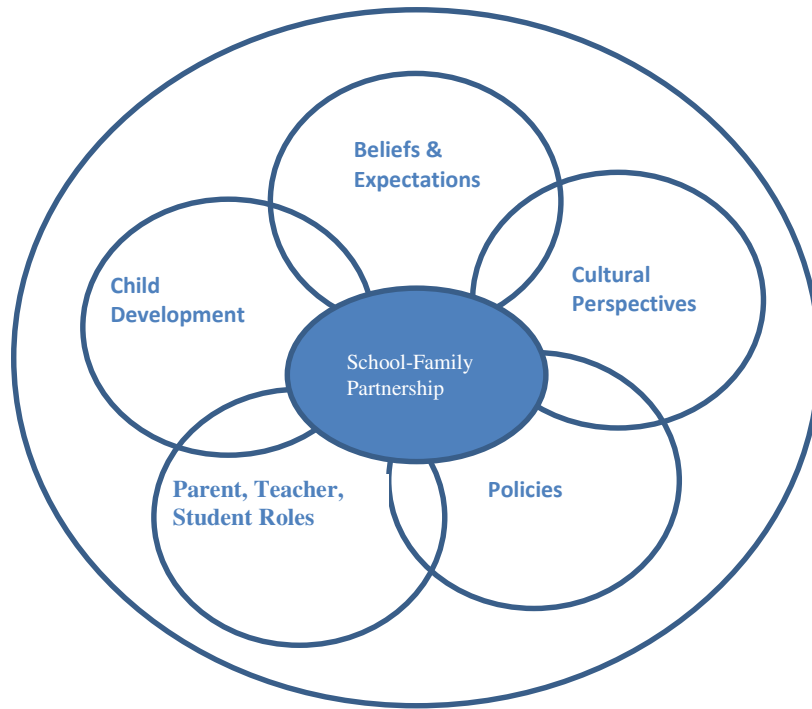


Figure 1. The Multi-dimensionality of school-parental partnerships (adapted from Patrikakou et al., 2005).

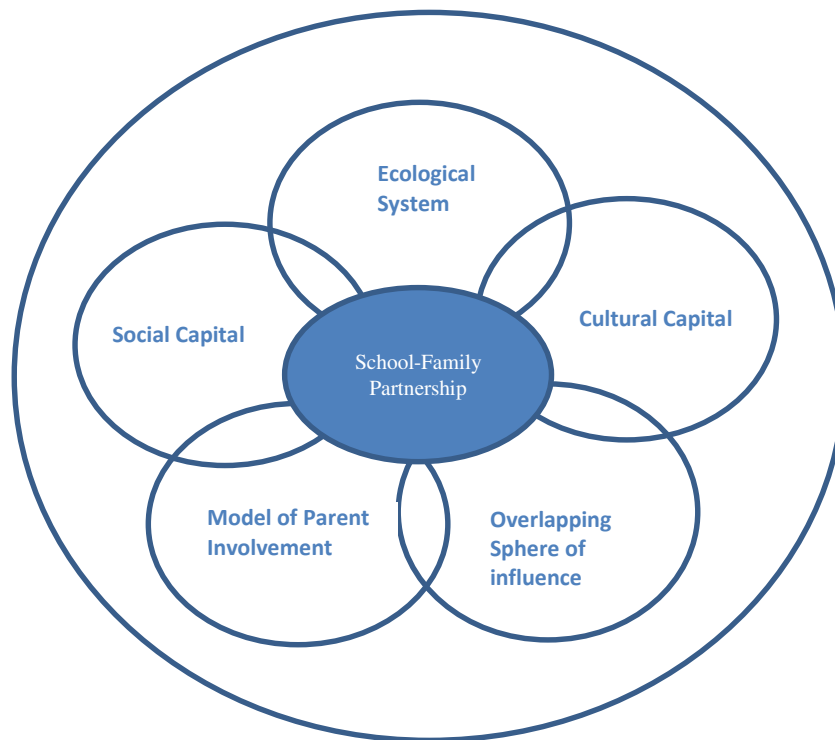


Figure 2. Parental Involvement theories for this study.

Coleman (1988), and the Model of Parental Involvement Processes developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1994, 2005) Ecological System Theory delineates this concept of multi-dimensionality of Parental Involvement in schools. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, an ecological theoretical system for human development, highlights the complex environments and relationships between people and the social contexts that shape the development of a child. This human ecological theory underscores the roles played by significant people groups and individuals in the children's development. Thus, the relationships between families, the school and the community over time impact the children's development.

Bronfenbrenner's (1994, 2005) ecological theory has four essential components comprising Process, Person, Contexts, and Time (P-P-C-T). Process is the interaction between the child and the environment within which development takes place, such as the reciprocal interaction between the child and parents (e.g. consistent academic socialization), between the child and the school (i.e., teacher instruction), and between parents and educators (such as PTA meetings). The second concept of Person refers to the characteristics of individuals such as age, gender, and race. These characteristics also include life experiences, aspirations, expectations and attitudes, which can impact the social interactions consequently affecting the development of the child.

Bronfenbrenner's (1994, 2005) Contexts include four environments within which the child develops. These Contexts are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. However, Bronfenbrenner included the concept of Time (chronosystem) to

the human ecological system. These five systems “conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 3) work together to support and influence a child’s development (Gordon & Browne, 2000; Tissington, 2008).

A child’s microsystems are the immediate environments of the child. These immediate systems are the school and the home, with each system influencing the child positively or negatively. These systems come together in the mesosystem where the social and interpersonal roles interface requiring effective communication and collaboration. The exosystems are the elements that indirectly influence the child’s environments such as education policies, parents’ workplace policies, or problems in the infrastructure. The macrosystems are overarching guiding principles for the school and society as found in arenas such as worldviews, politics, education goals, societal attitudes and cultural belief systems. The chronosystems, include factors that deal with passage of time such as age and death or the time parents spend in assisting children. These factors affect the child’s development (Gordon & Browne, 2000; Tissington, 2008). This theory suggests that the interaction of these environments can inhibit or enhance Parental Involvement in children’s education.

The core tenet of the ecological systems is the quality and content of the interaction within and between contexts within and without these systems. These interactions therefore shape the child. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory suggests that parents have great influence during adolescent development when teenagers are in secondary school.

Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

From Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, Epstein (2001) developed the Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory. The main emphasis of this theory is the cooperation and collaboration of three contexts: the school, the home, and the community. These three spheres overlap and separate to provide an appropriate environment for the student to develop, and to structure the child's learning. Epstein says that in the partnership "teachers and administrators create more *family-like* schools and families create *school-like* families" (p. 702), thus creating an environment for students' academic achievement.

In addition, Epstein (1995) established six types of Parental Involvement in schools that are widely accepted in education circles as the best definition for Parental Involvement. These forms of involvement consist of: parenting—the provision of a safe and supportive home environment for learning; communication between educators and parents; volunteering at the school in activities that support learning; parents' assistance in homework (learning at home); decision making in PTAs; and collaborating with the community.

Cultural Capital Theory

Cultural capital represents the cultural inheritance children are endowed with, for instance, skills, cultural knowledge (values, beliefs, customs, and traditions), resources, and social class that parents transfer to their progeny. Cultural reproduction is the transmission and perpetuation of cultural values from one generation to another (Bourdieu, 1977). The transmission happens vertically (from parents) or obliquely (from society including the school system) (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). Education, whether formal or informal (in the family), is the mechanism through which children acquire values,

preferences, and dispositions. Bourdieu (1990) later expanded the cultural capital concept to include factors that would affect the wellbeing of children and their academic achievement, such as family background, dominant cultural value, and parents' educational values. These values, skills, and resources once internalized are assimilated and integrated to become dispositions that form the basis of behavior and influence one's attitudes towards schooling (Navarro, 2006; Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu (1977) suggests that when cultural capital is transmitted and internalized it becomes habitus (dispositions) that guides the undertakings and behaviors of the child and consequently promotes better educational or life outcomes. Habitus are the internalized behavior, preferences, and tastes (dispositions) linked to social structures (race, gender, etc.) that shape and guide people's conduct and action. These dispositions condition children to fail or succeed. Therefore, children with more developed cultural capital are poised for success as they find it easier to adapt to the school system than children with less developed cultural capital.

Social Capital Theories

Social capital is defined as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships or mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248). In essence, social capital is comprised of networks whose members share values and resources which facilitate relationships and promotes cooperation and collaboration (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), the consumption of which depends on the size and effective use of social networks. For the networks to be viable, members must invest in the relationships, without which resources may not be accessible. Social capital is the

bedrock for the acquisition of other capitals (cultural, human, financial and informational). In addition, the quantity and level of networks one has is commensurate with the availability of capital one can use (Portes, 1998).

Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) definition of social capital includes the concept of power, which leaders use to marginalize others, and the concept that power provides privileges and advantages for those in leadership. In essence, Bourdieu's social capital focuses on societal structures and the struggle for maintaining power among groups or classes. The dominant classes in each field (sphere or arena) strategize to preserve their positions.

Social capital influences children's academic achievement because of the flow of information between parents and children, school and parents, and, between parents and other parents. Interactions and cooperation within and between the different groups (parents and the school) facilitate the exchange of ideas and enable parents to access resources and strategies for assisting children at home (Lee & Bowen, 2006). The networks thus formed promote self-efficacy. In addition, parents whose involvement practices may have been lacking can have vicarious experience through other parents' practices (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) which may influence them to be visible at school and to socialize their children and home.

Coleman's (1988) social capital has "two broad intellectual streams" (p. S95). The first stream includes norms, rules, and obligations that shape and order people's actions; the second stream, an economic aspect of social capital focuses on individuals who autonomously make their own goals and decision independently of the social group. Coleman indicates that both streams have flaws, in that the environment purposelessly

drives those who adhere to the first stream. In criticizing the second stream, Coleman indicates that society cannot function or be successful economically without people's actions being "shaped, redirected, constrained by the social context, norms, interpersonal trust, social networks, and social organization" (Coleman, 1988, p. S96).

Most importantly, Coleman's (1988) social capital constitutes three forms: a) obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of structures; b) information channels; and c) norms and effective sanctions. Coleman's perspective was that trustworthiness of a structure could be monitored and measured by how obligations and expectations functioned and were reciprocated. In addition, Coleman believed that information channels are key to relationships and development of social networks. Finally, norms and effective sanctions guide the functions of relationships and networks and can only work when individuals act collectively to support the norms.

Coleman (1988) also includes the concept of "intergeneration closure" which he defines as closing the gap that exists when goals are not shared or understood or when norms are violated and obligations are not met within social networks. Intergeneration closure promotes a trusting relationship when there is effective communication the sharing of goals, values and expectations with all members of the network.

Coleman (2000) expanded his definition of social capital to include the contributions parents make in monitoring children's after school activities, in providing rules, and in discussing the expectations and aspirations parents have for their children's education. Lack of social capital is seen when parents have little contact with their youth, possibly because both parents work and/or the child is actively engaged his peers. Social capital also emphasizes the networks and collaboration that can exist between parents.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parental Involvement Processes

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) adapted Bandura's (1994) theory as a construct for understanding the behavior of parents. They define parent self-efficacy as, "parents who are emotionally and directly concerned about their children's education success or whose personal sense of adequacy is emotionally connected to success in helping one's children be successful" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 315).

Parents' sense of self-efficacy is either promoted or hindered by the following factors:

1. Parents' level of education. Those with minimal literacy levels have difficulty in constructing meaningful activities to support their child.
2. Parents' past experience with school involvement may encourage or discourage current involvement, depending on the schools' policies and strategies or the parents' own experience.
3. Parents' involvement with their children which sometimes depends on whether their own parents were involved in their education.
4. Parents may get involved with their children when they observe others who are involved with their own children.

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) revised their theoretical model to include other motivational factors disclosed in their *Model of the Parental Involvement Process*. Of importance is parents' perception of invitation for involvement by the school and/or the child, and parents' construction of their role in their child's education. Invitations for participation from children often depend on cultural capital, type of communication between parent and child, and the adolescent's self-disclosure. For example, high school

students from collective cultures may have difficulty asking for help (Jones, 1985).

Each of the above theories and constructs discussed are important for considering the why and how of Parental Involvement and for understanding what promotes it and what hinders it at the high school level. In summary, children can succeed in schools if they are endowed with cultural and social capital. Epstein's (1995) overlapping spheres of influence explain how intertwined the relationship is between the school and the home and the need to explore factors that hinder or promote Parental Involvement. Parental self-efficacy and role construction are also essential for parents who want to get involved.

Definitions

Cultural Norms. Attitudes, rules, and behavior patterns that are considered appropriate in a given society (World Health Organization, 2009).

Extended Family. A large family unit that extends beyond father, mother and children to include various relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012).

Form Master. A teacher who is in charge of a classroom or classrooms of students and is responsible for the student grades in that class and for communicating with subject teachers and parents.

Gender Bias. Refers to the stereotyping of others (men or women) according to cultural norms. The prejudice comes from assumptions concerning women's physicality, abilities, emotions, and behaviors (Zinn, Hondagneu & Messner, 2010).

Parent Role Construction. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) define role construction as "beliefs about what they [parents] should do in relation to the child's education" (p. 89).

Private Secondary/High School. Independent schools owned by individuals or organizations but not administered by the government (Ng'ambi, 2011).

Proprietor. Both of the schools in this study have private school owners who have invested their finances in building or buying a school and are devoted to ensuring that their businesses are successful and sustainable (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

Self-efficacy. In the context of this paper, parental self-efficacy refers to the parents' perception that they have the ability to assist their children to succeed in school. Bandura (1994) defines self-efficacy as, "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 71).

Bounding the Study

The study focused on exploring parents' participation in children's achievement in formal education. While some recommendations in Chapter 7 have aspects of non-formal education in terms of schooling agents' capacity building in Parental Involvement, the purpose of the study was to determine and analyze relational dynamics between educators, parents, and children and how these relationships improved children's educational outcomes and defined Parental Involvement in Malawi private secondary schools.

Limitations

Since the data were collected in Malawi and most of the analysis was conducted in the United States, it was difficult to follow up some of the questions that arose from the analysis. When I returned to Malawi for additional interviews in 2011, I was not able

to reach some of the participants I had interviewed before.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 focuses on the methodology, research design, data collection, and analysis, and also presents criteria for assessing trustworthiness of qualitative research. Merriam (2009) suggests two stages for analyzing multiple case studies: the within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Therefore, Chapters 3 and 4 present contextual variables and content analysis for Case 1 and Case 2 respectively. Chapter 5 discusses gender issues that influence parents' lack of support for girls. A cross-case analysis, implications for practice and research are presented in Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses a theory of Parental Involvement for Malawi.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study integrated with ground theory analysis was to explore the nature of Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools. The intent of the study was to help administrators in the Malawi school system gain a better appreciation of the significance of Parental Involvement and provide an informed research basis for encouraging and/or enhancing Parental Involvement in schools. In investigating the phenomena, four research questions were addressed:

1. In what ways are parents involved with their children at the school and at home?
2. What are the enablers and barriers to Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools?
3. What are the attitudes of educators towards Parental Involvement in Malawi private secondary schools?
4. How does the relationship between school personnel and parents define the parents' role in Malawian private secondary schools?

This chapter describes the research methodology used to study the phenomena, including the rationale for the qualitative research method. In addition, the chapter also describes the research sample, research design, data collection and analysis methods, and

issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and ethics.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research methodology is used in exploring and discovering complex and sensitive issues including participants' perspectives, values, and beliefs. This approach comes from a philosophical belief that there is not a single perception of truth but multiple realities. This approach focuses on how individuals or groups construct and understand their perceptions of reality (Eisner, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My intent, therefore, is to garner emergent themes, to interpret and describe participants' perspectives and the 'subjective' meanings they ascribe to their experiences, and to holistically communicate their views (Creswell, 2007; Eisner, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). In contrast, quantitative methods (surveys and other positivistic methods) are only concerned with impersonal objective measurements that draw conclusions from data that has been collected from a distance but does not reveal the participants' unique viewpoints (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Eisner, 1998). This study was to explore multiple perspectives of Parental Involvement in two private secondary schools in Malawi. Thus, for the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach was the preferred methodology for design, data collection, and analysis.

Five tenets of qualitative research confirm its suitability for this study. First, data collection was conducted *in situ* because human behavior is best understood in its social context. Lincoln and Guba (1985) give a compelling reason for conducting research in a natural setting. They state, "Realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their context, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts (the whole is more than the sum of the parts)" (p. 39). As a field-based undertaking, I was directly

involved with participants and must continually negotiate my relationships with participants in order to build a trusting relationship that opens up communication channels (Charmaz, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Second, I was the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data and was able to interpret verbal and nonverbal interactions that occurred during data collection. Because of its interpretive nature, I must be mindful to keep my biases in check by reflecting on personal values and interests (Creswell, 2003; Eisner, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

Third, in spite of making rigid plans for conducting the research, qualitative studies often follow an emergent design as the researcher encounters new information that leads to changes in course of direction while out in the field. This could include decisions to add more subjects, to change types of questions, to add research questions, or to eliminate or add research sites (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010).

Fourth, qualitative research uses inductive data analysis during and after data collection. Continuous analysis is undertaken to make generalizations about the data. This leads to discovering emergent themes from the data (Charmaz, 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Finally, qualitative research depends on rich narrative descriptions that capture the interviews, focus group discussions and observations, and provides vicarious experience to the reader through quotes and excerpts. In addition, the data, context descriptions, the narratives and process descriptions are evidences that highlight how the results were attained (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010).

Multiple Case Study Design

This research used a descriptive multisite case study design, a qualitative approach for collecting, organizing and analyzing data taken from several case sites. The multisite case study derives its roots from the case study method. Creswell (2007) describes the case study methodology as a qualitative approach “in which the investigator explores a bounded system [a case] or multiple bounded systems [cases] over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 73). The word ‘bounded’ is defined further by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as “being unique according to place, time, and participant characteristics” (p. 344). Case studies are ‘particularistic’ because each case has its own peculiar contexts and is treated as a single unit (Merriam, 2009).

Unlike other qualitative research designs, case studies are preferred by social scientists for exploring complex cases that have multiple variables, especially if the focus of the research is to investigate other variables embedded within the phenomenon, such as educational innovations and evaluations (Merriam, 2009). This definition is corroborated by Yin (2009) who suggests that the case study is a comprehensive methodology for data collection and analysis. Yin defines first the scope of the case thus, “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). The second part of the definition deals with the technical aspect of the case study which includes the investigation of multiple variables, the presence of multiple data sources and the use of multiple data collecting tools for the purpose triangulation, and the use of a theoretical

framework for guidance. In addition, he maintains the methodology is appropriate for focusing the investigation on the ‘how and why’ questions as uncharted waters are explored.

Critics decry the use of case studies because of subjective bias during the collection and analysis stages. In addition, some critics deem case studies as less rigorous, unreliable, and having little to no basis for generalizing the findings (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 2009). In spite of the criticism, I considered this method appropriate for this study for the following reasons:

1. Each unique bounded case under study has complex academic, political, and social contexts and processes and therefore each case presents different perspectives on the subject in question (Merriam, 2009).

2. The causal links within the social contexts, the behaviors, and human experiences cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2009).

3. Multiple case studies increase the generalizability derived from cross-case analysis of the bounded cases under study (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2016).

Furthermore, the strength of this methodology lies in its flexibility for using a variety of data gathering techniques (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2009) which “‘close in’ on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 335). Concerns related to reliability and/or biases are addressed through the careful application of systematic procedures, to ensure the rigor of both the process and product (Birks & Mills, 2011; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

Although qualitative research designs utilize similar data collection and analysis strategies, the multiple case study approach was the most appropriate design for exploring Parental Involvement in Malawian secondary schools for the following reasons:

1. The method is relevant for in-depth investigation of real-life social situations.
2. Several cases could be examined thus providing information on how the phenomenon is implemented in various situations.
3. The selected schools are bounded systems which have multifaceted contexts and complex issues; by examining these contexts and issues I would arrive at what Parental Involvement entails in each of these settings.
4. The data collection design evolved to accommodate new information discovery during data collection.
5. The targeted individual cases have both common and unique characteristics that require cross-case comparisons, a process for minimizing some case study limitations identified by critics (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015).

Research Protocol

This section describes the steps taken in designing the study as well as the data collection process. A research design was developed prior to entering the field for data collection. However, the evolving nature of qualitative research necessitates changes to the design consistent with the circumstances in the field. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) assert that a researcher enters the field with ideas about procedures to be used but circumstances in the field dictate the actual methods for the study. The following are actions taken before and during data collection: conducting a brief literature review to

understand the Parental Involvement field; communicating with proprietors to gain access to the field; sampling participants; developing an interview protocol to guide in the data collection process; and using the iterative grounded theory methods for collecting and analyzing data (conducting interviews, coding data, writing memos and making appropriate changes to the protocol).

Literature Review

Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested delaying extensive literature review until data collection and data analysis is conducted to avoid forcing data to fit existing theories. Accordingly, I developed a conceptual framework to use as a basis for this study after familiarizing myself with Parental Involvement theories and literature (Birks & Mills, 2011). Of interest for this study were a variety of theories that have been proposed by various researchers discussed in Chapter 1, including Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 2011), Social and Cultural Capital Theories (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 2000; Putnam, 1995), and the Model of Parental Involvement Process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

The literature review also guided me in shaping the research topic and refining my research questions. After defending the proposal, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was approved to conduct the research. The IRB provided a brief description of the research project, the research design, and data collection methods as well as statements for protecting the human subjects (Appendix).

Gaining Access to the Field

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed the problems researchers meet in gaining

access to the field. Difficulties in gaining access arise from proprietors' protectionism, as they consider the potential risks of exposing their programs and personnel to outsiders. Knowing this problem, my initial plan was to seek help from Malawi MoE and ask for a list of schools from which I would select three schools. After a telephone interview with a MoE school administrator, I was encouraged not to work with the government schools because of bureaucracy. He also explained that government secondary schools did not fully implement Parental Involvement policies. He advised me to work with private schools because proprietors are easily accessible and have administrative discretionary authority and locus of responsibility for decision making for their schools (Choy, 1997; Kingdon, 2005). Communication with the schools was through long-distance telephone calls. I held several discussions with the proprietors requesting access to their schools. Three proprietors were eager to learn from the study and, therefore, positively accepted my request. Emails were written followed by subsequent visits to the schools. Follow-up letters were written and hand delivered to the heads of Kampango Educational Institution (Kampango) and Balala Educational Institution (Balala). I was not able to send a letter to Ulendo however, but continued to communicate with the proprietor via telephone and emails.

Participant Schools

Combinations of purposeful sampling strategies were used as choice procedure for selecting schools that would yield maximum relevant data for the study. Patton (2002) suggests that the success of purposeful sampling depends on one's knowledge of the field to be investigated. As was the case in this study, purposive sampling was made possible because of my knowledge of the Malawi education system, and the *a priori* relationship I

had with the MoE administrators and proprietors of the private schools.

Out of the many private secondary schools, the multisite case study focused on three private secondary schools, each selected from one of the three government administrative regions of Malawi. Accessibility to the school communities and parents of the students was my highest priority. The choice of the schools was made through a purposeful sampling process that identified dramatic cases, defined in Patton's (1990) words as cases where if the phenomenon "happens there, it will happen anywhere,' or, vice versa, 'if it doesn't happen there, it won't happen anywhere'" (p. 174).

Nevertheless, each of the selected schools was unique. A discussion of the peculiarity of each school will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The sampled schools had the following atypical characteristics compared to many private secondary schools in Malawi:

1. Each private secondary school had both day scholars and boarders.
2. The school was situated in the main city of the region.
3. The schools' proprietors were once teachers in the government secondary schools before operating their own schools. Even though the academic instruction is the responsibility of the headmasters and their teachers, the proprietors closely oversee the management of the schools and implementation of the curriculum.
4. The employment of qualified high school teachers for all their secondary school classes (Forms 1 to 4), a clear dissimilarity to other private secondary schools in the country.

It is important to note that proprietors in most private secondary schools in the Malawi encourage extensive student intake for monetary gains. Therefore, each of these

schools under study had 200 or more students.

Based on the above criteria the following schools were selected (see Table 4):

1. Kampango located in the city of Blantyre in the southern region of Malawi,
2. Balala located in the city of Lilongwe in the central region of Malawi, and
3. Ulendo Educational Institution situated in the city of Mzuzu in the northern region of Malawi.

Entry into the Schools

The main gatekeepers, the proprietors, whom I had contacted prior to visiting the campuses, facilitated entry to the schools. They arranged my meetings with the heads of schools. There were three purposes for my initial visits to the schools:

1. To negotiate my relationship with the administration (teachers and faculty) for the purpose of ‘establishing rules’ and conditions for working at the site (Patton, 2002), and for developing a working relationship with the educators and establishing camaraderie (Charmaz, 2006) in order to open communication lines necessary for data collection. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer one compelling reason for negotiating relationships with participants—that of ‘explaining ourselves’—the purpose of the research and processes of data collection.
2. To collaborate with heads of schools in developing lists of parent and teacher participants.
3. To recruit school personnel to assist in data collection for the purpose of triangulating data collection methods.

Table 4

School Selection Criteria

Criteria	Kampango	Balala	Ulendo
Situated in the city	Blantyre, southern Mw	Lilongwe, central Mw	Mzuzu, northern Mw
Family-owned (school managed by proprietors)	Husband and wife team	Individual female	Husband and wife team
Proprietors previously taught in government schools	Taught at both secondary school level and university	Taught at primary level school	Taught at primary and secondary school levels
Extensive student intake for day and boarding school students	700 day students and boarders	378 day students and boarders	200 day students and boarders
Employs qualified high school teachers	28	18	12

Sampling the Participants at the Two Institutions

Sampling Parents

The sample was delimited to Form 3 students; and selected educators from each school. According to the plans developed prior to entering the field, participants in all the schools were to be sampled using similar purposeful sampling methods in which the researcher deliberately chooses participants who can provide relevant and adequate information on the topic (Patton, 1990). Using criterion sampling, a purposeful sampling method, parents who lived in various locations in the cities would be invited to attend the focus group meetings and be interviewed. Patton recommends criterion sampling for selecting participants that “meet predetermined criterion.” Therefore, selection of participants was according to the following criteria:

1. Parents who would have the means to attend the research meetings
2. Parents who had shown interest in the schools
3. Some parents whose children had discipline and learning difficulties

4. Some parents whose children were doing well

Unfortunately, at Kampango the schools did not provide the student performance data, citing confidentiality.

At Balala, changes had to be made in accordance with prevailing circumstances at the school. In addition to the purposeful sampling, the “opportunistic sampling” defined by Patton (1990), as “sampling strategies to take advantage of unseen opportunities after field work has begun” (p. 179), became one of the strategies I used for sampling participants and collecting data. During my first visit at the school, the headmaster informed me of the forthcoming school break and the difficulty I would face in meeting participants during the Christmas holiday school break. He invited me to attend the parent-teacher conferences at the end of that week to collect data. These parent-teacher conferences are pre-programmed activities the school organizes for parents to discuss with teachers the students’ progress reports for the semester.

On the aforementioned day, I conducted interviews and also observed the parent-teacher meetings. During the interviews, participants who understood the purpose of the research nominated other ‘*information rich*’ (Patton, 1990) participants. Some of the participants nominated had students who had transferred to other schools. This referral type of sampling process is called “snowball sampling,” sampling made possible when participants or key informants recommend other individuals they perceive as having specific research content knowledge to participate in the study (Patton, 2002).

Sampling of the Ulendo Education Facility did not go according to plans. The problems that were encountered are discussed below under the section “Abandoning Ulendo Private Secondary School.

Sampling Teachers

Using a purposive sampling method, a “homogenous sample” (Patton, 2002) of teachers, a group that shared similar characteristics, was selected from each school. Headmasters at both institutions provided the opportunity for me to address teachers about the study, to conduct focus group sessions, and to administer the open-ended questionnaire.

Although all the teachers were eager to participate in the study, I noticed a discrepancy in the gender composition of teachers who were present. Both Kampango and Balala had very few female teachers. In response to my inquiry about the absence of female teachers in the schools, both heads of schools referred to the complex issues of female employment. They explained that schools preferred male teachers who are reliable and have less absenteeism compared to female teachers who are constantly absent due to the Malawian culture familial responsibilities (attending to sick relatives and death, pregnancies, and child rearing). The gender composition of teachers in these schools was very telling of the traditional beliefs and attitudes toward females.

Sampling the Ministry Personnel

In addition to sampling the three schools, I purposefully sampled two inspectors of schools and two administrators at the MoE for the purpose of understanding government policies regarding the implementation of Parental Involvement in Malawi secondary schools and whether these policies were mandated for private schools.

Sampling NGO Personnel

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) claim that the sample size is determined by the purpose of the study. They state,

In much qualitative research, it may not be possible or, indeed, desirable, to know in advance whom to sample or whom to include. One of the features of qualitative research is its emergent nature. Hence the researcher may only know which people to approach or include as the research progresses and unfolds. (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 231)

The flexibility and spontaneity of qualitative sampling methods provides the opportunity to expand and/or limit the sample size with the purpose of ratifying the data gathered. Although unplanned at the inception, during data collection, a ‘purposive’ decision was made to engage in a sampling method called ‘confirming and disconfirming cases’ (Patton, 2002), which in some books is termed “theoretical sampling” (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), a grounded theory method for collecting data that serves to refine emerging categories. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define its function as enabling “researchers to discover the concepts that are relevant to [the] problem and population” (p. 145). The pervasiveness of the assertions and perspectives I gathered at schools necessitated verification. Having been away from the country while studying in the United States, I had thought there was much progress in gender equity in education. I was determined to collect more data from the schools in order to further investigate this issue of gender inequality.

My discussion over the gender issues with some MoE personnel yielded names of potential participants outside of the bounded cases who would provide relevant data on Parental Involvement and gender issues. I was directed by one of the school inspectors to sample personnel from four NGOs that were involved in community/parent school participation research and a parochial school that had successfully involved parents in

their education program. I visited each of the following organizations: Save the Children Fund International, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Malawi; Care Malawi; and Project Hope; to discuss their experiences with Parental Involvement in schools. The information I gathered from these visits substantiated the findings from the two schools.

Data Collection Methods

The major strength of a multiple case study design lies in the use of multiple data collection methods that enable the researchers to compare information from one source with information from another source. Triangulation of methods and sources therefore allows deeper and broader investigation of the phenomenon while verifying and corroborating the evidence collected, thereby confirming research results (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). Data collecting methods for this study included interviews, focus groups, observation, open-ended questionnaires, and documents analysis (see Table 5). In order to keep accurate records, a tape recorder, computer recording software, camera, and a video camera were used for gathering data. I was responsible for gathering all the data. However, at each secondary school I sought the assistance of one of the administrators to collect data. At Kampango Private Secondary School the girls' section deputy headmaster helped in conducting the focus group sessions. At Balala the administrative secretary administered the follow-up questionnaire for the purpose of understanding in-depth parents' support of children at home.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview method became the primary data collecting method because of the flexibility it provides to mine information and to clarify complex issues (Rubin & Rubin,

Table 5

Data Collection Matrix

Case	Participants	Planned Methods & Participants	Actual Methods & Participants
Kampango	Parents	Focus group (N7) taped, Field notes	Focus group (n7) second group (n3)
		Interviews (N15) taped, Field notes	Interview (n26)
		Open-ended questionnaire (N15)	Open-ended questionnaire (n7)
	Teachers	Focus group (N9) taped, Field notes	Focus group (n6)
		Open-ended questionnaire (N9)	Interview (n3)
		Open-ended questionnaire (N9)	Open-ended questionnaire (n10)
Administrators Proprietor	Interview (N2) taped, Field notes	Interview (n3)	
	Interview (N1) taped, Field notes Documents	Interview (n2) Documents collected	
Balala	Parents	Interviews (N15) taped, Field notes	Interview (n13)
		Focus group (N7) taped, Field notes	Focus group (n5)
		Open-ended questionnaire (N15)	Open-ended questionnaire (n18)
	Teachers	Focus group (N9) taped, Field notes	Focus group (n5)
		Interview (12) taped, Field notes	Interview (6)
		Open-ended questionnaire (N9)	Open-ended questionnaire (n9)
		Open-ended questionnaire (N9)	
	Administrators Proprietor	Interview (N2) taped, Field notes	Interview (n3)
		Interview (N1) taped, Field notes Documents	Interview (n1) Documents collected
	PTA chairman Parent-teacher conference	Interview taped, Field notes	Interview (n1)
		Observation, Field notes	Observation (parents n18) (teachers n9)
	Ulendo	Teachers	Focus Group (N9) taped, Field notes
Open-ended questionnaire (N9)			
Proprietor Parents		Interview (N2) taped, Field notes	Interview (n2)
		Interviews (N15) taped, Field notes	Interview (n0)
Parents		Focus group (N7) Taped, Field notes	Focus group (n0)
		Open-ended questionnaire (N15)	Open-ended questionnaire (n2)
MoE	Personnel	Interview (N4) taped, Field notes	Interview (n3)
		Interview (3) taped, Field Notes	Interview (n4)
	Other Informants		

2005; Seidman, 2013). Rubin and Rubin (2005) define qualitative interviews as, “conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion [that] elicits depth and detail about the research topic by following

up on answers given by the interviewee during the discussion” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 4).

It is through these interviews that the researcher has an understanding of the “experiences, motives, and opinions” of participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview method is a technique one can use for a small or large number of participants when exploring contexts and reasons (Merriam, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In essence, interviews assist researchers to collect data that provide participants’ perspectives, which could not have been collected through quantitative methods, such as surveys (Gay, 1996). Although recognizing subjectivity as a challenge, Meho (2006) argues for using this method because interviews improve our social and cultural understanding of a phenomenon.

Harrell and Bradley (2009) have defined interviews on a continuum according to how the interview process is controlled. There are three types of interviews the “unstructured, semi-structured, and structured” interviews. With the unstructured interview, the researcher has limited control over participants’ responses. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the structured interview. The researcher uses standardized open-ended questions and each interviewee is asked the same question following the same sequence to ensure data collected can be compared across the participants.

Semi-structured interviews on the other hand have standardized open-ended questions. The interviewer uses the questions as a guide for pursuing pertinent issues and for probing to clarify the responses (Boyce & Neal, 2006; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Participants have the freedom to express themselves without being influenced by the structure of the questions. Semi-structured

interviews, however, can be challenging to the unskilled researcher, especially when participants are uncooperative or have other agendas for participating. For this study, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol, a set of open-ended questions used to guide the researcher during interviews. Table 6 shows the relationship between the research questions and the interview questions.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are interviews for small groups that focus on a theme with the purpose of collecting multiple perspectives of a topic (Merriam, 2009). Krueger (1994) defines focus group as, “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (p. 6).

Advantages of focus groups include gathering data from many participants in one or two sessions and the opportunity for the group to act as checks and balances for individuals who provide inaccurate information. Notwithstanding the benefits, focus groups require skill to execute the process (Birks & Mills, 2011; Creswell, 2003; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Merriam, 2009). The researcher may face several challenges such as forceful individuals who can influence and skew the discussion, or the problem of ‘groupthink’ (Janis, 1972) when participants desiring harmony conform without asserting their own ideas. Training in conducting focus groups is critical to getting better outcomes. Nonetheless, the social nature of focus groups provides an environment for extemporaneous discussion that provides relevant information (Berg, 2001; Merriam, 2009).

For this study, I followed Krueger and Casey’s (2009) characteristics and strategies for focus-group procedures, which included: creation of an interview/focus-

Table 6

Description of Interview Protocols

Research Question	Interview Questions and Prompts	Interviewees
In what ways (how) are parents involved with their student at the school and at home?	How do you support your adolescent with his education? How often do you supervise your child's study? Who helps your child with homework? Do you provide incentives to your child for good grades? What type of incentives? What type of punishment do you give your child when s/he does poorly at school? How do you motivate your child to have better grades? (Tutors? Less work? etc.) In what ways does what happens with your child at school influence what's going on around the house?	Parents Teachers Administrators PTA Chairman Proprietors MoE and Parastal Organizations
What are the attitudes of the schools (educators) toward Parent Involvement?	How often do you meet with your child's teachers? If you do, why do you meet with your child's teachers? and Why not? Who is responsible for ensuring that the child does well in school and why? What type of communication do you have with your child about school? Does the school have a PTA? Why? or Why not?	Parents Teachers Administrators PTA Chairman Proprietors MoE and Parastal Organizations
What are the enablers and barriers to Parent Involvement?	How often do you go to your child's school? How are you encouraged to attend school functions? What type of school functions do you participate in? What are the problems you face in getting involved in your child's education?	Parents Teachers Administrators PTA Chairman Proprietors MoE and Parastal Organizations
How does the relationship between the school personnel and the parents define the parents' role?	What type of school functions do you participate in? What do you think would be your role if you got involved at your child's school? What would you want the school to do to get you involved and why? Does the school have a PTA? Why? and Why not?	Parents Teachers Administrators PTA Chairman Proprietors MoE and Parastal Organizations
Focus group questions	What is the status of Parental Involvement at your schools? Are there any barriers and how did the school deal with them? What strategies would increase Parental Involvement in the school? How are you encouraged to attend school functions?	Parents Teachers

group protocol (see Table 6), questions, conversational responses, organization of settings for the focus-group session, the use of facilitators who were culturally competent, and the importance of tape recording the focus-group discussions. In addition, I decided

to use homogeneous groups, groups that shared common background and experience to ensure participants were at ease. In this case, I separated the teachers from the parents.

The recommended number of participants in focus groups is between six and ten (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kitzinger, 1995; Merriam, 2009); however, group composition for this study varied from three to seven participants according to those who came to the arranged meetings. Although each session was to take one and a half hours, the actual sessions ran from one hour to two hours. I conducted five homogeneous focus-group sessions comprising one teacher group and two parent groups each from Kampango and Balala. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary.

During the interviews, I used tape recorders to capture participants' accounts and perspectives of the phenomena. At the end of each focus-group session, I wrote memos and reflected on the message I heard. My data collection team member (assistant headmaster) helped me in finding solutions to difficult issues such as allaying fears of parent participants working at the school who felt their participation would have negative consequences.

Participant Observation

To augment triangulation in data collection, I included direct participant observation as a tool for observing parent-teacher relationships and school activities involving parents. I adapted Merriam's protocol for observation (see Table 7) to guide me in my observation. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) define participant observation as, "a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied" (p. 2). Observations assist the researcher to notice behavior that cannot be collected through other data

Table 7

Observation Matrix

Category	What to Observe
Physical setting	Type of space allocated Resources available
Participants	Role of the teachers Gender distribution Behavior of the participants
Activities	Patterns of interaction between teacher and parent Sequence of the interaction Structure in place How many teachers do parents visit? How is the activity introduced? How long does the activity take?
Kinesics Researcher	Non-verbal communication, e.g., sighs, dressing What is my role? How do I perceive what is happening?

Note. Adapted from Merriam (2009, p.120).

collection methods. In addition, observation allows the researcher to witness the phenomenon *in situ*. Observations provide a way for validating or invalidating emerging findings.

Observation as a research strategy is criticized because of its subjectivity. Critics argue that observations are unreliable because of the observer’s perception of reality. In addition, the act of being observed may affect participants’ behavior (Merriam, 2009). To assure accuracy, I developed an observation protocol (see Table 7) using Merriam’s suggestions. The protocol also included three types of nonverbal communication, behaviors that cannot be expressed by words (Sharma & Mishra, 2009): chronemics (Bruneau, 1980); proxemics (Hall, 1963); and kinesics (Birdwhistell, 1952, cited by Waiflein, 2013). These concepts were adapted to ensure I would systematically assess the interaction without participating in the conversations.

Since this study was conducted in a country that adheres to polychromic cultures

(collective cultures that have unstructured time keeping) (Storti, 1999), and visits to the school were during working hours, I saw the relevance of including the concepts of chronemics, “the study of people’s use of time” (Simonds & Cooper, 2011, p. 73). I used the concept to draw my attention to numbers of attendees and times they presented themselves at the school. In addition, the concepts of proxemics, “the study of how people use space” (Simonds & Cooper, 2011, p. 68) increased my perception of the distance between the participants during the interactions and how the room was arranged. How people position themselves portrays the type of attitude or regard they have towards one another. Furthermore, the inclusion of items that assessed the body movements (kinesics), manifested in gestures and facial expressions (Goman, 2008, Poyatos, 1983, 2002; Waiflein, 2013) would convey meanings of the exchanges between the participants. The results of the observation were recorded in field notes and later analyzed to provide a tool for cross-checking and confirming interviewees’ self-reports. The observations were recorded in field notes guided by the observation matrix (see Table 7).

Open-Ended Questionnaire

As a triangulation mechanism, participants who were willing to put their perspectives on paper were given an open-ended questionnaire. Open-ended questions are unstructured questions which provide the respondent the freedom to answer the question and to explain without the control of suggested responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For participants who were not willing to voice their perspectives in focus groups, the open-ended questionnaire gave them the opportunity to discreetly respond to sensitive questions. Participants who filled in the open-ended questionnaire were those who participated in the interviews and focus group sessions. Individual responses were typed

and the transcripts were included in the database analyzed together with other data through computer-assisted qualitative data software (CAQDAS).

Documents

Merriam (2009) defines documents as “ready-made source of data . . . that include just about anything in existence” (pp. 139-140) which are related to the study such as school records, government documents, letters, and memos. Documents are often used to supplement data collected through other methods such as in-depth interviews, but are not inferior to other methods (Mogalakwe, 2006). As a written communication, documents can provide evidence of credibility and stability to other collected accounts as they cannot be altered. Through content analysis, “a systematic procedure of describing the content of communication” (Merriam, 2009, p. 152), the data can be assessed for its significance to the research. Relevant to this study were policies and school records, i.e., letters to parents, school reports, and newsletters.

In each school, I collected information that would substantiate the school’s activities, protocols and practices such as newsletters and communication between the school and parents. Apart from the documents I collected from the school, I kept a diary that recorded my field notes. Field notes are accounts of researchers’ experiences and perspectives made during data collection. Some of the field notes were taken during the interviews or focus group sessions, others were written immediately after the sessions to capture my impressions of unique occurrences or discussions. The field notes were analyzed for their relevance to the study and some of the notes are incorporated in Chapters 3 and 4 and provide a lens for understanding some of the parents’ perspectives.

Changes in the Field: Abandoning Ulendo Facility

Qualitative research is defined by its methodological flexibility (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). In some cases, other planned activities are abandoned once it becomes clear that the case is not yielding results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ulendo Education Facility data was collected from teachers, administrators, proprietors, and two individual parents. The school had internal difficulties that spilled out to the parents, resulting in non-participation. Teachers were demanding a salary increase and thought I was there as a journalist with the sole purpose of writing an article about the problems at the school. Even though there was an agreement to invite parents to meet me, no effort was made to send letters of invitation to them. On the first day, I had a meeting with the proprietor who informed me that the headmaster had been briefed and had made arrangements.

My interview with the headmaster revealed that he did not receive clear instructions about my visit and his role in the project. After the initial discussion, he arranged for a focus-group session with the teachers. The following day I visited with the teachers to ensure that they had an understanding of the purpose of my visit. I realized that the teachers were not interested in the research, but wanted to discuss their problems. They also indicated that I was not to publish their discontent with the school. Only one teacher agreed to be interviewed. I discovered his motive for his willingness to sit for the interview was to inquire about schools in the United States. I was dismayed by this time. I asked him a few questions about Parental Involvement at the school and he simply stated that the school did not involve parents. At the end of that day, the headmaster

informed me that he had invited parents to come the following day. Yet only two parents arrived. Both individuals indicated that the school had problems. Although they had come, the women did not want the proprietor to know of their presence. I resolved to abandon the school as it would not yield relevant data for the study.

Organization of Data

All interviews including focus-group interviews were tape recorded with a handheld recorder or into a computer recording program. Each interview was transcribed immediately after the data were collected. Open-ended questionnaire responses and documents were all sorted and labelled according to the school they came from. The responses were later typed. Pseudonyms were created for all sources to ensure anonymity.

All interviews and field notes taken during the interviews were transcribed word for word. It is recommended that researchers personally transcribe the interviews (Hardy & Bryman, 2004) as part of the analysis process. I used transcription software “Express Scribe” installed on my computer which speeded-up the transcription process. Since fifteen of the interviews were in the Chewa language of Malawi, I had to translate the data into English. A colleague who was also fluent in the Chewa language listened to the tapes to ensure that the English translation represented the participants’ voices as closely as possible. For quality control, I listened to the interviews to check for accuracy.

By nature, multiple case studies produce more data than other qualitative methods because the method requires collecting data from diverse populations connected to the case. Handling such massive information can be cumbersome and confusing. All data were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo, a CAQDA software for storage. The use of

NVivo 8 assisted me to systematically organize and analyze the data and make linkages between the concepts.

Data Analysis

Initially, my intention was to visit the school, and complete data collection using the semi-structured interview protocol. The plan was to have the analysis undertaken after all the data had been collected. On the first day of data collection, several issues came up during a focus-group meeting. I realized I needed to explore the issue of parents' attitudes towards their female students. I was compelled to revisit my research protocol to include the question "If you had to choose between a boy and a girl to send to school which child would you send?" In addition, the emergent themes from my transcription and coding, a systematic labelling of emergent categories, prompted me to consider developing a theory that explained the type of Parental Involvement model used at the schools. Merriam (1998) contends that case studies can use any data collection and analysis method. She argues,

Case studies do not claim any particular method for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering, from testing to interviewing, can be used in a case study, although certain techniques are reused more often than others. (p. 28)

Although not designed as a grounded theory study, with this understanding of multiple data analysis processes, and the iterative nature of data collection and simultaneous analysis, I decided to adopt grounded theory analysis approaches. Grounded theory is an inductive methodology that uses a constant comparative data analysis process to build theory from data. The iterative grounded theory process entails collecting data and analyzing the data by comparing incidents with other incidents, passages with other passages, codes with other codes until the emerging theoretical categories derived from

this iterative, inductive process have reached saturation (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006; Meriam, 2009). Charmaz (2006) defines categorical saturation as the process at which, “gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (p. 113). While I began the study as a straight forward multiple case study design, it became evident during data analysis that the potential for a theory existed within the cases. As a result, after I completed the cross-case analysis, I used the findings as a springboard into developing a theory.

Notwithstanding grounded theory processes, some emergent themes that could have been explored in more depth were omitted due to their irrelevance to the developing theory. The theory, however, was developed from areas that were completely saturated as I probed for clarification of participants’ viewpoints.

The following are steps that I undertook during the analysis. Initially, I conducted line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2006) with the aim of understanding participants’ responses and views on Parental Involvement. Coding is a classification process that helps identify patterns and concepts in the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Emergent codes were assigned labels. The coding process led to data reduction and also helped me to identify gaps in the data which resulted in developing more questions for in-depth clarification. Focused coding, also called ‘axial coding’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), followed the line-by-line coding. This step involves creating categories and grouping concepts with similar meanings into categories. As more categories became apparent, I began to link them and determine their relationships. In grouping the concepts some codes were expanded and others were subsumed by more appropriate codes. The iterative process of abstraction, and generalization, led to the identification of a core category, an

overriding or main theme that integrated all the categories. To strengthen the emerging theory, I carefully considered participants' discrepant accounts for the purpose of confirming or disconfirming the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I used memo writing, defined by Birk and Mills (2011) as “records of thoughts, feeling, insights and ideas in relation to a research project” (p. 40), during data collection and analysis process. Memo writing was especially useful for organizing my thoughts during focused coding and as I attempted to look for relationships among the data. Some of these memos specifically guided me in conceptualizing Parental Involvement concepts in Malawi and were subsequently incorporated in theory development.

This final process of theory development included abductive reasoning, a process used to explore best possible explanations of the emergent theory (Charmaz, 2011; Reichertz, 2007). Timmermans and Tavory (2012) define abductive reasoning as,

the form of reasoning through which we perceive the phenomenon as related to other observations either in the sense that there is a cause and effect hidden from view, in the sense that the phenomenon is seen as similar to other phenomena already experienced and explained in other situations, or in the sense of creating new general descriptions. (p. 171)

These authors corroborate others who confirm that a researcher's ability to perform abductive reasoning depends on the consideration of emergent themes from the data, the researcher's knowledge and experience, and theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2011; Reichertz, 2007).

Much time was spent in analyzing the emergent themes and looking for passages that supported them. In addition, I focused my attention on the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 1 and conducted a literature review to support what I saw as an emergent theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) which is discussed in Chapter 7.

Single Case and Cross-Case Analysis

There are a variety of analytical techniques for case studies, such as pattern matching, linking data to propositions, time-series analysis, logic models, and explanation building (Yin, 2009); however, cross-case analysis is the most appropriate method for developing a conceptual model for Parental Involvement in Malawian private schools.

By nature, multiple case studies are designed to better understand the phenomenon rather than to evaluate the individual cases (Stake, 2006). However, it is critical to discuss and analyze the contexts, issues, and activities of each bounded case in order to understand the uniqueness of each case, how the similarities and differences contribute to the understanding, and define the phenomenon. Stake argues, “The individual case studies should be studied to learn about their self-centering, complexity and situational uniqueness. Thus, each case should be understood in depth, giving little immediate attention to the quintain” (p. 5) or the phenomenon being studied. In supporting reasons for analyzing each case, Stake further affirms, “The power of case study is its attention to the local situation, not how it represents other cases in general” (p. 8).

With this understanding, part one of the analysis focused on how each school’s content and contexts responded to the research questions. The responses to each research question include evidence collected as well as reports of deviant examples that did not support the emergent themes. Part two of the analysis provided a theoretical framework or model that delineates a comparative cross-case analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009) and situated the emergent theory in literature.

Presentation of Findings

Two authors have recommended ways of reporting case studies and grounded theory. Yin (2009) proposed three types of multiple case study presentations which include: a) reporting individual cases separately in addition to providing a separate cross-case analysis chapter or section; b) reporting of findings follows a question and answer format using a set of questions that are covered in each of the chapters; and c) organizing the report chapters according to the cross-case analysis topics. Birks and Mills (2011), on the other hand, recommend that grounded theory findings should be presented first and then the discussion that follows is supported by literature. For clarity, I chose an eclectic use of ideas from these authors. I decided to report each case study individually presenting the findings supported by literature. The cross-analysis chapters that follow provide a discussion of responses to the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Strategies for assuring accuracy in data collection, analysis, and interpretation are imperative to ensure trustworthiness of the study. Inasmuch as validity and reliability are the criteria for measuring accuracy and consistency of the measurement and findings of quantitative studies, these criteria have positivistic undergirding (Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The philosophical assumptions for qualitative research are different requiring the use of assessment criteria that are consistent with the paradigm. In aligning the criteria to its naturalistic paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose using the terms credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as criteria for assessing trustworthiness of a qualitative study. It is imperative to specify strategies for data collection and analysis to counteract biases and

to deal with ethical issues that would arise as a result of the multiple realities the researcher and the informants bring to the study.

Triangulation

Triangulation is one of the methods that enhance rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research, especially in areas of credibility, dependability, and confirmability. It is an important process that decreases the risk of misrepresenting grounded theory processes, and it provides a way of confirming data for accuracy and consistency (Stake, 2005). Simply stated, triangulation involves the use of multiple sources and perspectives to ensure findings do not emerge from a single source, method, or perspective.

Triangulation may involve the collection of data from various sources, the use of a variety of data collection methods, collaboration with several investigators in collecting and analyzing data, and looking at the data from multiple perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Table 8 displays the triangulation data collection strategies used in this study.

In addition, member checking or participant review of transcripts (respondent validation) and peer review methods are types of triangulation used to confirm the accuracy of transcriptions. These aforementioned processes triangulate with each other to arrive at the presentation of authentic findings. Furthermore, Yin (2009) indicates that the use of multiple data collection methods from multiple sources is important in addressing varied issues and behaviors. He points out the advantages of triangulation as, “the development of converging lines of inquiry” (p. 115), which is “more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode” (p. 116). Combinations of strategies were used to achieve

triangulation in my study (Patton, 2002). In triangulating, multiple data sources (Barbour, 1998, Patton, 2009), I used two bounded cases, Kampango and Balala to provide the opportunity for cross-case comparisons and contrasts. In addition, data were collected from parents, teachers, proprietors, a PTA chairperson, MoE personnel, and NGO personnel. Methods of triangulation, particularly within the qualitative research design (Kimchi, Polivka, & Stevenson, 1991) entailed the use of more than one method for data collection which included interviews, focus groups, observations, open-ended questionnaires, and document analysis.

During the study, I involved an administrator from each school to assist in collecting preliminary data, which was used in refining the interview protocol. These individuals also assisted in data collection. The use of multiple investigators (investigator triangulation) serves the purpose of decreasing bias during and after the data collection and analysis processes and also increases the integrity of the findings (Denzin, 1989; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Yin, 2014).

In trying to establish credibility in the findings, I used multiple analysis perspectives. Apart from the single case analysis and the cross-case analysis, I also used member checking as the participants are best positioned to judge the credibility of the findings. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest peer debriefing as a tool for ensuring credibility of findings. Two scholars who were culturally conversant with both the education system and participants' beliefs and values were involved in interpreting the same data set I had analyzed. After debriefing sessions comparing their interpretations with my analysis, I incorporated their themes where I felt their perspectives captured the participants' voices.

Table 8

Triangulation

Question	School	Sources	Method
In what ways (how) are parents involved with their student at the school and at home?	Kampango	Parents	Interviews Focus groups Open-ended questionnaire
		Teachers	Interviews Focus groups Open-ended questionnaire
		Administrators	Interviews
		Proprietors	Interviews
		Others (MOE & parastatal org.)	Interviews
	Balala	Documents	Document analysis
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups Open-ended questionnaire
		Parent-teacher conferences	Observation
		Teachers	Interviews Focus groups Open-ended questionnaire
		Administrators	Interviews
What are the attitudes of the schools (teachers, and administrators) towards Parental Involvement?	Kampango	Proprietor	Interviews
		Documents	Document analysis
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups
		Teachers	Interviews Focus groups
		Administrators	Interviews
	Balala	Proprietors	Interviews
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups
		Parents-teacher meeting	Observation
		Teachers	Interviews
		Administrators	Interviews
What are the enablers and barriers to Parental Involvement?	Kampango	Proprietor	Interviews
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups Open-ended questionnaire
		Teachers	Interviews Focus groups
		Administrators	Interviews
		Proprietors	Interviews
	Kampango	Others (MOE & parastatal org.)	Interviews
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups Open-ended questionnaire
		Teachers	Interviews Focus groups
		Administrators	Interviews
		Proprietors	Interviews
How does the relationship between the school personnel and the parents define parents' role?	Kampango	Others (MOE & parastatal org.)	Interviews
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups Open-ended questionnaire
		Teachers	Interviews Focus groups
		Administrators	Interviews
		Proprietors	Interviews
	Balala	Documents	Document analysis
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups
		Parents-teacher conferences	Observation
		Teachers	Interviews
		Administrators	Interviews
How does the relationship between the school personnel and the parents define the parents' role?	Balala	Proprietor	Interviews
		Documents	Document analysis
		Parents	Interviews Focus groups
		Parents-teacher conferences	Observation
		Teachers	Interviews

Credibility

Merriam (2009) focuses on whether the research findings are true to reality when discussing credibility (internal validity). Unfortunately, reality is in the “eyes of the beholder.” With each individual providing a different perspective of reality, the findings rely on the researcher’s accurate analysis of the people’s understanding of reality without assuming her perspective. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the researcher “must show that he or she has represented those multiple constructions adequately, that is, that the reconstructions . . . that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible to the construction of the original multiple realities” (p. 296). The question then becomes: How can I ensure the data represents what is real and whether the meanings are accurate (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010)?

Several authors have proposed measures for ensuring research credibility. As discussed above, I used the processes of triangulation, member checking participants, and peer review to ensure appropriate representation of participants’ perspectives. Furthermore, during the analysis process negative and discrepant findings were disclosed to ascertain that all participants’ voices were represented. Examples of these types of findings are found in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Dependability

The question of whether or not the processes and results of the study are consistent and can be tracked over time is often problematic if the researcher does not provide ‘audit trails’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These are the details “how data were collected, how categories were derived and how decisions were made throughout the

inquiry” (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). Taking notes and writing memos began during the first focus group when I realized that participants were discussing some issues that were a surprise to me and needed clarification. Often, I took notes during the sessions. At times, I wrote notes after the sessions so as not to disturb the session flow. At the end of the first focus group, my assistant and I met to debrief. We focused on clarity of the research plan and decided to add to the research protocol questions consistent with what we learned in the interview.

Transferability/Generalizability

Opponents of qualitative research methods especially, case studies, criticize the method because they believe findings cannot be generalized to a population. In Flyvbjerg’s (2006) discussion of the “five misunderstandings” about case study research, the second misunderstanding reads, “One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development” (p. 421) because generalization depends on an individual who wants to apply the finding to their own situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, proponents of qualitative research recommend, providing ‘thick descriptions’ that include participants’ voices to provide insider accounts and perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). In addition, generalizability strategies should be planned from the onset of the study to include triangulation of participants and methods (Merriam, 2009). The concept of generalizability in qualitative research is often understood in the context of usability of the research. Although the findings may be in the context of one single case study, through the ‘thick descriptions’ and the findings, the reader should have a ‘vicarious experience’ leading him/her to “decide whether the findings can apply to his or her

particular situation” (p. 226). In this study, I discussed the research process, as well as providing an analysis which includes participants’ voices to enable readers to apply this information to their own situation. In addition, the thick descriptions, recommendations, and practical ideas could be used by educators and researchers interested in Parental Involvement.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to how objective the findings are; that is, whether the findings corroborate with data that was collected and analyzed and not the outcomes of the researcher’s biases, perspectives, and subjectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that objectivity “exists when inquiry is value free . . . without impact from the values of the inquirer or any of his or her cohorts” (p. 300).

Confirmability may be forfeited because of sampling bias of articulate elite informants who may not represent the population. To address issues of bias and to confirm the findings, several strategies were used. Critical to qualitative research are the “audit trails” discussed above to keep track of and assist in examining data collection and analysis processes. Included in this strategy were field notes, memos, and journals that I kept as I reflected on the contexts and processes to ensure biases were kept in check. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) include the ‘member check’ as way of establishing credibility. They define ‘member check’ as “data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions [that] are tested with members of those stockholding groups from whom the data were originally collected” (p. 314). During the data collection, the individuals who assisted in conducting the focus-group sessions checked transcripts and provided feedback.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research stipulate a researcher's moral responsibility toward participants and it is demonstrated through strategies used in the implementation process. Ethical considerations also provide a way of assessing the researcher's sensitivity to participants' rights (Eisner, 1998; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Building participants' trust is conducive to the formation of relationships which enables easy access to data. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that participants' commitment and trust is linked to the relevance of the study, especially when the "respondents can see the inquiry as fulfilling some personal need" (p. 256). Apart from treating participants with respect, I used three very important measures for ensuring the development of trust:

1. I discussed the research purpose at length with the proprietors and heads of schools to ensure buy-in of the study and to involve them in decision making about sampling and the identification of informants. At each school, I incorporated an administrator in data collection. In addition, I visited and got acquainted with some parents working at the schools prior to data collection.

2. Following the IRB recommendation (2006), I negotiated consent from all participants before interviews, and focus group sessions. The consent form spelled out the purpose of the study, the research design, and data collection methods. Participants were also offered the opportunity to decline participation if they were uncomfortable.

3. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through the omission of names in the reports. I assigned pseudonyms for each participant and school. I informed all participants that I would seek their permission if a need arose for identifying a participant.

Incentives

In this study, incentives were given to parents at Kampango. The headmaster suggested giving incentives because many parents lived outside the city and needed transport money to get to the meetings. Since parents at Balala had a purpose for coming to the school, it was not necessary to give them incentives. Headmasters at both schools encouraged me to provide incentives for their teachers to encourage them to participate in the study. Opponents of participation incentives cite the problems of coercing participants to get involved in a study as it can result in lack of participant autonomy (Grant & Sugarman, 2004; Singer & Couper, 2009; Patton, 2002), because the incentive upsets the power balance between the giver and the given. The recipient may be coerced to provide a service against his/her better judgment. Incentives in terms of money or gifts-in-kind, however, have been well accepted in research circles as their use helps to improve questionnaire response rates and they motivate participants to sit for interviews or focus groups.

Self as Research Instrument

As an instrument, the researcher situates herself in the community to collect data and is intricately involved with the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Relationships are at the core of qualitative research with the probable outcomes of influencing results. Critics of qualitative researchers believe that researchers cannot rise above their own biases and cannot truly be objective during the research process. The positions that one takes in research are inextricably connected to the concept of bias and ethical responsibility (Birks & Mills, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) indicate that ‘personal stance’ influences the research one undertakes. Personal stance is defined as, “a position taken towards an issue that is derived from a person’s beliefs and views about the world . . . and reflects deeply held attitudes and concerns about what is important” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 69). One’s education, life experiences, and interests affect personal stance. Self-disclosure of the researcher’s relationship to the study, her experience, values and beliefs, and reflexivity, addresses these issues and provides transparency. The concept of researcher’s positionality is critical to the present research because I grew up in Malawi, I observed the interactions between parents and teachers, and I am not exempt from having predispositions regarding relationships that exist between teachers and parents.

The narrative that follows elucidates why this study of Parental Involvement in children’s education is of importance to me. In addition, my positionality concerning this research and the steps taken to ensure rigor are discussed below.

I come from a collective culture where filial piety (the respect of the elders) is the norm. As the firstborn in a family of nine children, I was privileged to experience the best parental care and the worst child-rearing blunders made by my parents. Both my parents were primary school teachers before they retired. As I grew up and got into elementary and high school education, my parents believed I should epitomize their expectations of the best and the brightest. There were primary school days when I did not bring my ruler home from school, afraid it would be used as a tool by my father to increase my short- and long-term memory. He believed in “not sparing a rod.” And there were days when I jubilantly skipped, danced, and raced home to show my parents and cousins that father’s unconventional tutoring methods were not in vain.

Their involvement in my education in high school resulted in my becoming a good student. In addition to their involvement, thanks to my father's interest in the written word and his example, I discovered the art of reading books. I had the highest record of any student for reading library books during my high school years.

This brand of Parental Involvement in my family was only peculiar to me. My parents softened and their zeal for educating their children started to wane after the third child. The rest of the children never attained higher education except for one who worked hard to educate himself.

When I joined the teaching profession, I felt God was calling me to service and I believed that I would make an impact in the lives of young people. Little did I know the challenges of teaching in my country! The training I had at a Seventh-day Adventist college, though adequate for teaching high school, was not sufficient for dealing with the challenges of Third World country classrooms. I saw many young people, especially girls, enter the portals of learning and drop out—often at the encouragement of relatives who could not see the long-term benefits of education. Many girls succumbed to the socio-cultural norms that often deemed education for girls to be a waste of time. Depending upon the socio-economic status of the family, parents often encouraged their male children to start earning money as soon as they finished elementary or high school. Unlike my parents, many parents who were interested in educating their children believed teachers had the sole responsibility for motivating children to learn.

Some years later, I joined the Community and International Development profession. I collaborated with parents in building schools for their children because government high schools were only meant for the bright and elite students. In addition,

access to rural secondary school in the early 1990s was limited. I witnessed NGOs build schools and report to donors that parents' participation was key to their success. After my Master's degree in International Development, I was privileged to evaluate an Adventist Development and Relief Agency basic education program in Uganda, and realized that parental participation in school projects and on the PTA board was dependent on the strategies used and the power exercised by administrators and community leaders.

Looking back to my earlier years and my professional experience, I have come to appreciate the importance of Parental Involvement in children's education. I cannot neglect the fact that there are many variables that contribute to better educational outcomes. However, positive messages about school, in whatever form, coming from parents are important for retaining students in schools and for encouraging the children to acquire the skills for a productive lifestyle. I believe God ordained parents to be the first teachers of children and, therefore, they should work together with school teachers to ensure that the children are prepared for self-sufficiency and a life of service.

Dealing With Bias

Addressing the issues of bias and subjectivity, the researcher must constantly assess held views and biases. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) discussed "locating the researcher in relation to the participants" (p. 71). During one focus group meeting, I found myself disputing the information I heard. I became annoyed when one teacher stated, "It is not necessary to educate girls beyond primary school because they will get married and will not help their parents." I responded by telling him that it is the girls who actually help their parents when they are educated. That evening I spent time evaluating my role as an interviewer, and I wrote my thoughts in a journal (Memo). One of the steps

I decided to take was to ensure I do not judge participants but should try to have a vicarious experience by attempting to walk in their shoes, to understand them by listening to their stories, and to keep a journal that documented my views, reflections, feelings, and perplexities (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). I also decided that at an opportune time, I would have a discussion about their feelings concerning girls' education. My good intentions never materialized. The school closed (school break) and the opportunity to engage teachers in this discussion failed.

Reflexivity facilitates the understanding of the research process "by questioning our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumption, prejudices and habitual actions to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others" (Bolton, 2013, p. 13). Thus, the researcher critically assesses how she perceives herself and how others perceive her presence and actions. Reflexivity, therefore, supports the research process by enabling the researcher to modify preplanned theories and actions (Birks & Mills, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). To accomplish reflexivity, I undertook the practice of systematic reflection and analysis. In addition, there was need for me to consider the parents' cultural and professional background to ensure that I did not dismiss the packages each parent brought to the research. I had to be mindful that my cultural experience in a postmodern world with a high-paced, individualistic lifestyle did not override the participants' perspectives and their understanding of their predominantly collective cultural worldview. Knowing that my life experiences provided me with multiple lenses with which to view the world, I strove to critically evaluate my feelings about the brand of Western education I am familiar with to ensure that I do not measure the Malawian education system with my own perspectives.

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter discussed the research design and methods for data collection and analysis for the study. The multiple case research design included purposeful sampling methods for selecting participants, data collection procedures, grounded theory analysis, strategies for achieving rigor, and ethical consideration for attaining accountability to the participants.

CHAPTER 3

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT KAMPANGO

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Analysis

In order to explore Parental Involvement in Malawi private secondary schools, Kampango Secondary School presented itself as a rich data source. It had enrolled both day scholars and boarders, had employed qualified teachers, and the proprietors had taught in government schools before operating their own schools. Accessibility was an important element in the choice of schools. Apart from the school being in town I knew the proprietors. This chapter defines what Parental Involvement looked like at Kampango. It highlights the Kampango context, describes specific processes used to collect data at the school, and provides an analysis of the data collected at this school.

The Kampango Educational Institution Context

Kampango is situated at the bottom of the valley approximately two miles from the main road. It is in a low middle class suburban area surrounded by two villages on the fringe of the city of Blantyre. With very little land to expand, the proprietors constructed two-story buildings to accommodate the classrooms and the dormitories. The school, in operation since 1998, is a family business owned by two experienced educators, one of

whom is a higher education professor. There is no school board to oversee the school's operation.

Student Enrollment

Most of the students at Kampango come from middle to higher economic status families. The school also enrolls students from low-income families who commute to school daily because they can potentially meet their payment obligations. Even though the school is expensive, the lack of better education in Malawi compels parents to enroll their children in the school (Walton, 2010). Students who pass primary school without being selected to government secondary schools, students who fail the JCE examination and those expelled from other schools for behavioral issues have a second chance to complete secondary education at Kampango. In addition, those who fail the MSCE examination and have little chance of further education or finding gainful employment can repeat classes at Kampango.

Streaming and Gender Segregation

From 1998 to 2005 the school operated as a co-educational entity, but the disparity in examination outcomes between the boys and girls, forced the proprietors to operate single-sex schools on the campus, believing that girls would do better without boys in the classroom. The institution also wanted to curb misbehavior and truancy which had increased in the co-educational classes. Within the gender sections, the students in each school were further divided into streams to provide opportunity for both boys and girls to improve their academic outcomes (Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba, 2006). Streaming in many secondary schools is according to students' abilities. Grouping

students according to achievement levels enables teachers to efficiently and effectively provide whole-class teaching without differentiating instruction (DePape, 2006; Kilgour, 2008).

In 2006, the total number of enrolled students at Kampango was approximately 700 students. Neither administrators nor proprietors provided exact total enrollment numbers citing the fact that other students were unregistered even though they attended school. However, in questioning them at different times, I was able to figure out that there were approximately 500 boys (325 boarders and 175 day scholars) and 170 females (100 boarders and 70 day scholars). Most of the classes were divided into two streams, but Form 3 in the boys' section was divided into three streams A, B, and C, with each class holding about 80 students. The student body ranged from ages 12 to 23 years old. By 2011, the student intake had grown to 1,200.

Staffing and Administrative Roles

Each of the two sections within the campus maintained a full faculty. Unlike many private schools and CDSS, the private school employed 28 qualified teachers, three of whom were female teachers for the girls' section, highlighting serious gender inequality. Nearly all the teachers were subject specialist teachers with four-year degrees. In response to a question I asked the proprietor about the qualifications of his teachers, the male proprietor proudly claimed,

Of those twenty-eight teachers, I think it's only about six that have diplomas [3-year degrees], the rest are degree holders [4-year degrees]. Yes, degree holders from Chancellor College, from Domasi School of Education, from Mzuzu University, from Polytechnic, from Bunda College of Agriculture. Mr. Dule

The proprietors oversaw the administration of the school, made all the school-related decisions including types of curriculum for the school, student intake, and

employment of teachers and the acquisition of school supplies. The headmasters and their deputies were responsible for the day-to-day school operations, the successful implementation of the curriculum and the supervision of teachers. Specific teachers were designated as form masters to oversee the class schedule, student grades, discipline, act as student advisors, and to serve as point persons to communicate with parents. In addition, the school had a supervision system that involved students. Although class prefects only monitored other students, prefects at this school were given the additional responsibility of reporting to the administrators when teachers were absent.

Curriculum at Kampango

Malawian private schools are not mandated to only offer the official Malawi secondary school curriculum. Kampango chose to offer the Malawi government secondary school curriculum administered by the MANEB. The curriculum included English, Mathematics, Chichewa, Geography, History, Biology, Bible Knowledge, Accounts, and Business Studies. Students wrote exams after two years and four years of secondary school. Those who passed the subjects in Form 4 improved their prospects of being selected to university. In addition, because of the resources and science laboratories at the school, Kampango became an examination center for other secondary schools that had inadequate resources.

Following the government school schedules, classes at Kampango started at 7:30 am and ended at 3:30 pm with an hour lunch at noon. In addition, the school instituted a study period from 3:30 to 4:30 pm to enable day scholars the opportunity to complete their assignments before going home. For boarders, the school had two other times for

study, from 3:00 am to 5:00 am in the morning and from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm in the evening.

Data Collection at Kampango Secondary School

In this section, I focus on the activities that may shed light into the analysis that follows. Table 9 provides data collection methods at this school which comprised of focus groups, semi-structured interviews and an open-ended questionnaire. The open-ended questionnaire did not provide much information because respondents tended to write very short answers. Furthermore, I was unable to collect documents from the school, however, I was allowed to see their registry as well as copies of the letters to parents. In addition to the letters informing parents about the increase in school fees, most of the letters were requests for parents to come to school to discuss disciplinary issues or requests for payment of school fees.

Parents' Focus-Group Sessions

Most of participants who attended the first focus-group session belonged to the low socioeconomic bracket (economic status relative to Malawi). None of the participants who came to the first parents' focus-group session had vehicles. They came by bus or walked to the school. I was surprised that parents who lived very close to the school did not come for the focus-group meeting. This puzzled me. An interview with the proprietor shed light on the villagers' refusal to participate in the focus group. The proprietor explained, "*Cooperation from this village is lacking because they think I am exploiting them, I am benefitting from the tuition. They refuse to assist even in building a better road to the school.*" To capture thoughts of the parents in the village, I visited and

Table 9

Methods and Participants in Case 1

Case 1	Participants	Planned Methods & Participants	Actual Methods & Participants	
Kampango	Parents	Focus group (<i>n</i> =7)	First Focus group (<i>n</i> =7)	
		Taped, Field Notes	Second Focus group (<i>n</i> =3)	
		Interviews (<i>n</i> =15)	Interview (<i>n</i> =26)	
	Teachers	Taped, Field Notes	Open-ended questionnaire (<i>n</i> =15)	Open-ended questionnaire (<i>n</i> =7)
		Open-ended questionnaire (<i>n</i> =15)	Focus group (<i>n</i> =9)	Focus group (<i>n</i> =6)
		Focus group (<i>n</i> =9)	Taped, Field Notes	Interview (<i>n</i> =3)
	Administrators	Open-ended questionnaire (<i>n</i> =9)	Open-ended questionnaire (<i>n</i> =9)	Open-ended questionnaire (<i>n</i> =10)
		Interview (<i>n</i> =2)	Interview (<i>n</i> =2)	Interview (<i>n</i> =3)
	Proprietor	Taped, Field Notes	Interview (<i>n</i> =1)	Interview (<i>n</i> =2)
		Interview (<i>n</i> =1)	Taped, Field Notes	
		Taped, Field Notes	Documents	Documents collected

interviewed participants in their homes after the parent focus-group session.

My data-collection colleague, the Vice Headmaster Mr. Masamba of the girls' section of Kampango, and I moderated the first parents' focus-group meeting, which comprised of two female and five male participants in addition to the boys' section headmaster. During this session, I also took notes, recorded the interviews and kept track of who said what during the discussions (Bryman, 2012). The session was conducted in a classroom with desks positioned in a semblance of a circle conducive for an appropriate involvement for interaction (Sharp, 2009). The facilitator and I had good eye contact with all the participants.

During the session, I observed how one of the women sat sideways facing away from the men. I immediately surmised that the woman perceived herself as less educated and there was a likelihood of her conforming to the men's ideas. Traditionally, in the presence of men, Malawian women act demure and defer all decision-making to the men even if they are not related to the men (Hemson, 2002). I concluded that what I was

observing from her posture illustrated cultural norms and social contexts impact the relationships between the sexes and the outcomes of mixed focus-group sessions. Initially, she did not participate in the discussion until all had spoken. I was however surprised when she strongly refuted the men's assertion that only educated males help their parents. Literature on focus groups recommends its composition to be homogenous groups to curb conflicts (Smithson, 2000), especially so in collective cultures where females cede their power in respect of man's superiority (Hemson, 2002). However, an experienced moderator can navigate these difficulties when the group is heterogeneous (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Because of the skill exhibited by my research partner, both genders participated in the discussion.

Educators and Parents First-Time Meeting

Although the purpose of the focus group was to gather data from the parents, the boys' headmaster joined the group as an observer. His presence caused me considerable consternation for I felt that participants might not be free to discuss sensitive topics. My concerns were allayed when he encouraged open dialogue which resulted in participants boldly asking the headmaster sensitive questions they had never asked before. Morgan and Krueger (1993) suggest that focus groups can be valuable "when there is a gap between professionals and their target audiences, [because] they are a powerful means for exposing professionals to the reality of the customer, student, or client" (p. 16). During the session, some of the participants asked accusatory questions and vehemently stated that communication at the school was lacking. To avoid conflict and because of the contentious nature of the dialogue, I arranged for individual interviews to probe for a deeper understanding of the nature of their discontentment. I also hoped they would

suggest solutions to the problems. Unfortunately, only one came for the interviews. The others excused themselves because they were busy. As I pondered over the freedom of parents in discussing issues, I deduced that the participants were not intimidated by the administrators because they were employees and had problem with the school policies.

The second focus group took place on March 25, 2011. The purpose of the meeting was to gather supporting evidence for themes arising from the parent focus groups and interview sessions done in 2007. In order to generate a theory from themes that had emerged from the analysis, I decided to collect additional data to substantiate or disaffirm the emergent themes. Glaser and Strauss (1967) define theoretical sampling as a process that helps to “maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p. 201). For this study, the theoretical sampling was for theory building “whereby the analyst jointly collects codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (p. 45).

Three parents were present for the second focus group session which was conducted in a small room away from the main offices, without the presence of school administrators. These participants were individuals working at the school who had children at the school. One of these individuals had participated in the first focus-group session and was now working at the school. He was aware of the developments at the school. The following questions were asked: How are you involved in your children’s education at the school? Which gender should be supported in secondary school and why? Is there a PTA at this school? However, the information gathered from the focus group and from interviews allowed me to arrive at a theoretical saturation, a closure to

my analysis as I discovered that most of the responses and reasons were similar to the data I had collected in 2006. These parents however provided more in-depth responses because they had more experience regarding the questions I was asking. As it turned out, Mr. Molele had two boys at the school, Mr. Mabelu had two girls at the school and Mr. Mphwechi had one boy at the school.

Interview Sessions

Most of the interview sessions in November and December 2006 were conducted at the participants' homes or in their business offices. The protocol used in the interviews is described in Chapter 2; however, I used the same questions in 2011 for the focus group session described above.

Organization of the Findings

The following sections will discuss teachers' and parents' perspectives of Parental Involvement. Instead of responding to individual questions, the chapter will focus on emergent themes from the analysis of data. The findings are divided into five sections: Section 1 discusses "Who is Responsible for Children's Education;" Section 2 delineates "Families' Perception of Parental Involvement;" Section 3 discusses "Educators Perception of Parental Involvement;" Section 4 discusses the "Isolation of Parents;" and Section 5 discusses "Communication between the School and the Families" (see Figure 3). The concluding section presents a "Summary" of the research findings at Kampango.

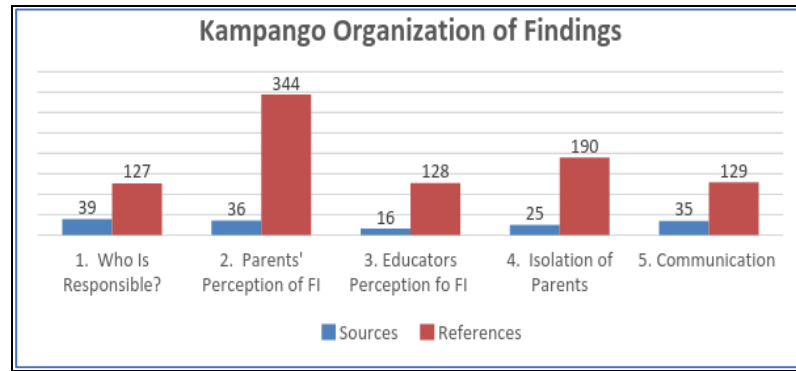


Figure 3. Kampango organization of findings.

Section I: Responsibilities and Roles

Who Is Responsible for the Children's Education?

Addressing the fundamental question of “Who is responsible or accountable for the children’s education?” provides an understanding of Parental Involvement at Kampango. The attitudes and beliefs of the proprietors, teachers and parents toward the education of children determined the assignment of responsibility and shaped the climate within which Parental Involvement took place. An analysis of the responses from parents (see Figure 4) indicated that quite a few participants saw education as their sole responsibility because they raise children and financially invest in their education. However, most parents and teachers agreed that education of children should be a shared responsibility.

The parents felt that the school could not work without the parents’ participation; neither would the parents educate their children without the formal schools. Likewise, during a focus group session, educators unanimously agreed that involving parents would support their own efforts to educate the children and help them achieve their teaching



Figure 4. Who is responsible for the children’s education?

goals. The following comments illustrate parents’ and teachers’ understanding of Parental Involvement.

“I believe it is the coordinated effort between parents and teachers. The parents make sure they provide the funds and make sure that the children get to school while the teacher must teach to ensure that the child understands.” Mr. Kalulu

The teacher cannot work in isolation from the parent and the parent cannot. A teacher will not receive a child who hasn’t been sent to school by a parent. I would say both of them play a very important role. Headmaster, Mr. Semu

Principally what has been forgotten is that education starts right away from the doorstep in the home. Education starts from childhood and the school provides continuation. Therefore, when you talk of education, it means the nursery ground is nurtured by the parents, then it is the teachers’ turn. They are just the people to proceed with the education which preliminarily has been initiated by the parents. Mr. Bemba

“Personally, I would think that parents play an important role when they work hand-in-hand with us teachers.” Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

“Together we can work towards the goal of the kids.” Teacher Lendati

Differentiated Roles

Although parents and educators defined education as a shared responsibility, much of their discussion dwelt on differentiated roles. Most of the parents assigned

teachers two important roles: instruction—the learning process and the responsibility for academic outcomes; and communication—providing information to parents. The rationale for assigning the responsibility for instruction stems from the understanding that teachers are professionals, have pedagogical training, and are experts in teaching courses (Attanucci, 2004).

The teacher has the greater academic responsibility because we have taken our children from home and sent them to school. So, the teacher has the greater responsibility of ensuring that the children do well. We also have the responsibility of working with the teacher to ensure that the child is doing well in school. Mrs. Mbale

“Teachers’ responsibility is to ensure that the student learn the material or the subjects.” Mr. Mphwechi

“Their responsibility is teaching the children subjects so that they can learn and have a good life.” Mr. Kalanje

“The teachers have the freedom to supervise the children or decide not to supervise because the child is ours they are there just to teach.” Mr. Dzuka

“Teachers must teach courses but also see that the child is living up the parents’ expectations.” Mr. Mulanje

Like the parents, the administrators also believed teachers have the greater responsibility for academic outcomes and parents have a secondary role, that of supporting teachers indirectly, at home.

“So, 90 to 95% of learning is the teachers, and 5% is the guardian or the parents of the child at home. But in the case of boarders, 98% is the teacher and 2% is the parents.” Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

Although Kampango educators spoke of collaborating with parents, they were ambivalent about parents’ level of involvement except to assign them a supportive role to

teachers—that of supervising their children at home. Some parents also agreed to this role of parenting their children for better behavior, thus supporting the teachers’ assertions. The following statements encapsulate parents and administrators’ understanding of parents’ role.

“The parent should help the teacher in motivating the child at home.”

Headmaster, Mr. Semu

The main responsibility lies in the hands of the parents. The parent is the one who takes cares of her ward to make sure that the ward follows everything he or she has learned at school. For example, in terms of discipline, the parent should make sure that when the children come home, he should follow up the school behavior of the boy or girl at home, otherwise the children would fall into bad company.
Mr. Chache

“Yes, we have interaction with them. Mainly when it comes to issues with discipline.” Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

Literature on education indicates that parents and education specialists hold teachers accountable for students’ performance (Maphosa, Mutekwe, Machingambi, Wadesango & Ndofirepi, 2013; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Since parents lack teaching skills, academic instruction is deferred to teachers. This is specifically so in Sub-Saharan Africa. McGillicuddy-DeLisi and Subramanian (1994) conducted a cross-cultural study in Tanzania and the USA and found that parents prefer to leave the teaching of school subjects, especially science and math, to teachers who have the expertise.

Section II: Parents’ Perceptions and Support

Parents’ Perspectives on Parental Involvement

Parents spoke of having primary responsibility for the education of their children, but believed they had a secondary role in academic instruction, This implicit perspective stems from their role in raising children, molding their character, and ensuring that the

children are educated. Mrs. Kambale seemed to capture parents' sentiments with the following statement, "Actually, we, parents, are important for the education of the child since we raise and provide for them, put them in school to get an education."

There are three recurrent themes in parents' responses concerning Parental Involvement: a) Their financial obligations to the school as critical for the education of their children (Financing Children's Education); b) their commitment to constantly motivate the children and to monitor their progress at home (Home-based Involvement); and c) their support of extended relatives' children (Supporting Orphans and Social Orphans) (see Figure 5).

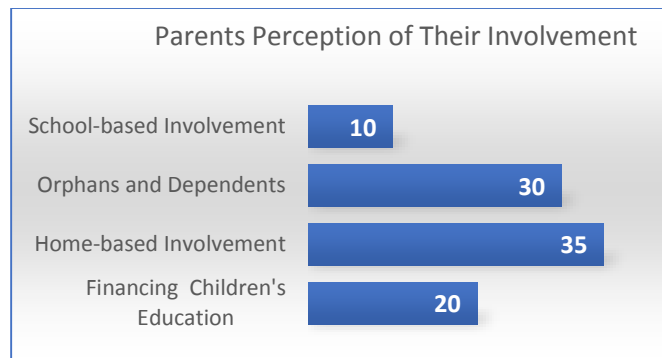


Figure 5. Parents Perception of Their Involvement

Financing Children's Education

Families' perception of their role in children's education starts with their decisions to financially invest in their children's education and keep up with the payments. Nearly all the participants except for two parents indicated that their biggest challenge was financing their children's education. In addition to paying school fees and examination fees, parents are also responsible for providing education-related resources

(textbooks, lab fees, school supplies, transportation, uniforms, fees for school excursions and sometime private tutoring) (National Statistical Office & Macro International, 2004; World Bank, 2010). The assertions below provide an insight into the parents' view of "Who is responsible for your child's education?"

It is our responsibility to pay fees because if we don't pay the fees in time, the school may send the child back home and his education will be hampered. Parents must ensure the child goes to school and has our support including required materials for school. If these resources are lacking the child does not succeed. Mr. Mphwechi

"I help my child by paying fees." Mr. Donda

The one who is important is the parent. The teacher cannot go to the child's home and tell the child to go to school. The teacher waits for the children to come to school to get educated. If parents are not sending their children to school, there is nothing that the teacher can do without the students. Mr. Molele

"If their parents had not sent their children to school, the teachers would not be there to teach them." Mr. Sadziwika

The most dominant response to the question "How are you involved in your child's education?" on the open-ended questionnaire was, "*By paying their school fees.*" Thus, Parental Involvement was defined as paying school fees for children's education. Financing children's education ensured that children would obtain an education beyond primary school. Therefore, other types of support were secondary.

Most of the participants to this study were relatively poor. Their children walked long distances to school or rode buses, the fares parents could barely afford. Some parents, as was the case with Mrs. Naga, had to borrow money for tuition, an indication of their socio-economic status and the sacrifice they had to make to ensure the children were in school. An administrator concurred on the parents' financial bind and how it affects the education of their children.

Most people in Malawi are living below the poverty line. Since the inception of

the multi-party in Malawi, there is a problem in the economy. This was a radical change from a government-run economy to a free-market economy without much publicity so people were left to embrace a system that doesn't make sense. Even the education sector was privatized and forced the students to choose where they needed to go for school. However, the fees at the private schools are quite high. So, most parents cannot afford to send their children to private school, let alone boarding schools. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

Education in Malawi is critically intertwined with family's financial capability (Dizon-Ross, 2014; Porter et al., 2011a). Studies in Malawi show that secondary education is not free (World Bank, 2010; Chimombo, Meke, Zeitlyn, & Lewin, 2014). Enrollment in a private school depends on the parents' socioeconomic status to be above a certain financial threshold—well above the poverty line (Lewin & Sayed, 2005; Martinez-Mora, 2006). Consequently, few Malawians have obtained secondary education. For example, in 2010 only 17% of adult men and 11% of adult women had attended or completed secondary education (National Statistical Office & Macro International, 2010).

The household expenditure on education is pretty steep when the socio-economic status of the parents is considered. The Malawi statistics show a 44% rate of household expenditure on secondary education, of which 59% is tuition, 18% is for textbooks and other education resources (laboratory fees, school excursions, etc.) and 23% goes for expenses such as uniforms, travel costs, food, etc. (Porter et al, 2011b). Parents have to forgo other expenditures to ensure their children obtain an education. Just to put this in perspective, 50.7% of the population in Malawi in 2010 were living under the poverty line in contrast with 65% in 2004 (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

Home-based Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement in children's education at Kampango occurred mostly at

home and to a lesser degree at school. Data supports varied ways in which parents were involved in children's education at home (see Figure 6). Their strategies included conversations with children about school; monitoring study time and assisting with homework; reducing children's chores; and providing incentives and/or rewards such as, money, clothes, electronic gadgets, etc. Families' home-based involvement was varied and at different levels. Other parents however were not involved at all due to their social contexts. Kampango parents stressed that their role was to instill value for education, motivate, and encourage their children to study. Parents knew that without education children would have no future. As revealed from data analysis, the main home-based Parental Involvement strategies fall into three categories: Academic Socialization, Monitoring and Providing Structure for Children's Academic Activities, and Assisting With Homework.

1. *Academic Socialization.* Transmitting both practical and philosophical messages was parents' main encouragement strategy. They used a gamut of coercive statements to elicit positive academic outcomes. Families communicated their aspirations and expectations and gave advice to the children about school. Conversations included finding out how the children were doing in school, counseling children on how to deal with teachers, and generally discussing school issues. Although some parents had exasperatingly difficult interactions with their children at home, they hoped that the children would have a sense of their parents' desires. In addition, parents expected that when the children assimilated the advice, it would lead to better study ethics and potential academic success (Grolnick, Friendly, & Bellas, 2009). Families shared some of the following about the interaction with their children,

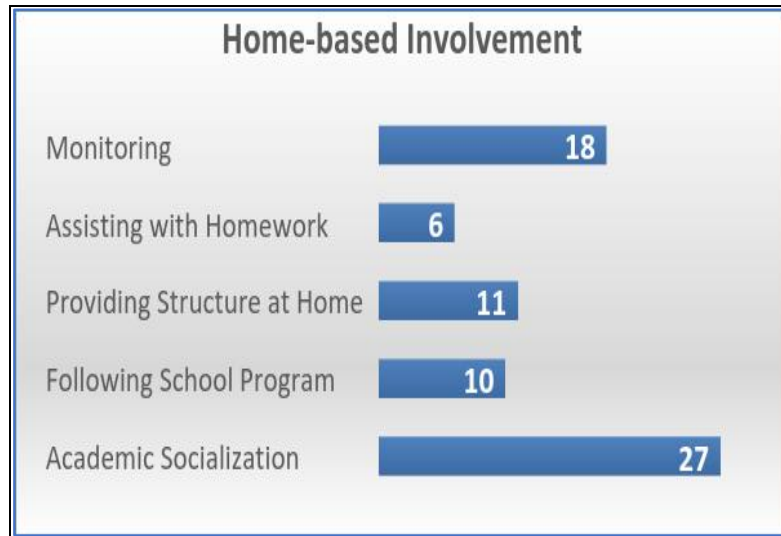


Figure 6. Home-based Involvement

I just encourage them and ask them about the subjects they are having problems with. If they tell me it is Mathematics, I tell them that Mathematics needs a lot of practice and I encourage them to work on the Math. If you have friends that you can go for help, they should go to them and they should study with them. Mr. Mbale

My child told me that in some classes he has problems understanding what the teacher is teaching, so I tell him to study at home. This is important for his success at school. I tell him that if you read, you will be successful in your education. If you do not understand what the teachers are saying, you should have the courage to ask them without fear so that your future will be successful. Mr. Makani

“I do talk to them about school. I normally give them my example that without school, I do not know where I would be after I lost a husband. So naturally, they like school.” Mrs. Pako

When I am at home I encourage my son and we talk about his future and his education. He is encouraged and tries hard. I work here and I see a lot of children and how they are doing. Some are doing well and others fail. I tell him not to follow what those who are rich are doing. Mrs. Chulu

Often parents referred their children to positive role models they could emulate or gave examples of people whose social economic status had improved through education.

The discussions I have with my children, mostly I try to point them to people who are doing well and how they got there. Mostly I try to point out good models for them, those who have gone far with their education. I tell them that this person got to the position he or she is because of education. I tell my children the importance of school. You know young people need encouragement as they do not realize the importance of school and they do not have realistic aspirations. It is important to help the children to know good examples and bad examples so they are able to choose what is good for them. Mr. Mphwechi

I point out to them positive models. I tell them that the president's wife did not just get there, but she started small in Standard 1 in primary until she got to Form 1, 2, 3 until she got to the university. She did not get discouraged until she finished her degree and became a Minister. . . . But if you do not listen to what I am advising you, you will be like a person who goes to the doctor but does not take the medicine and finally dies. So, if you do not listen to your parent, you will fail and you will be a failure all your life. Mr. Molele

Sometimes I encouraged her by pointing to her sister that her sister is now a teacher and she needs to work hard as her sister did. . . . They have relatives that are outside of this country. These relatives are educated. I point to these educated relatives as their role models. The girl has caught the vision, while the boy is still lagging behind. I ask them about what they want to be. When they tell me, I tell them that the best way to get there is to study hard. Mrs. Ndirande

Concrete examples of those facing hardship because of lack of education were also part of academic socialization. Some parents used their own personal testimonials about their educational experiences to encourage children to do better and to avoid falling into the same economic malaise.

If you do not go to school, you will be like me. Look at how I am suffering. If you do not go to school, you will be in trouble. But if you persist in education, you will not suffer but you will be able to help others and you also can help us. If you have problems with your family, you will not feel it much for you will be able to earn your own living. Mr. Kalanje

I did not go far with my education, I failed. So, I point to them my own example. I tell them that I failed and did not go far with school, and my aspiration for them is that they do well and they should not turn out like I did. People are no longer illiterate. I tell them to get educated and take the examples of those that are really doing well in life. There are many examples. They observe those that are driving and some dress up in the morning going to work. They should not follow my example—looking scruffy and dirty. Mrs. Kambale

Previous literature indicates that universally parents, illiterate or not, have a

positive influence on the education of their children when they interact with their children about school (Altschul, 2011; Trusty, 1999). Listening to their children and communicating parents' aspirations and expectations influences the children's own aspirations (Hill et al., 2004; Jeynes, 2007; Lippman et al, 2008; Patrikakou, 2004, 2008). It is important to note that when children have a clear vision of what is expected of them, they are bound to take education seriously (Jeynes, 2007). A study conducted by Patrikakou (2004) measured Parental Involvement factors that influenced academic achievement of children who were followed from eighth grade through college. The tests found that parents' perceptions and expectations were related to student expectations, time spent on homework, and student academic achievement.

2. *Monitoring.* Some parents simply stated it was their duty to ensure the child succeeded in school. Other pointed to the distrust of the academic environment in private schools. They believed private school teachers were underprepared, lackadaisical and uncommitted to teaching. Mrs. Kapinga's statement captures parents' opinion regarding private school teachers when she stated, "*Unfortunately, many teachers take on the teaching for the pay. Very few teachers are really interested in ensuring that the child learns,*" Mrs. Kapinga. Therefore, parents checked children's assignments and monitored their study time.

"So many times, I check his books, so that I can see what is happening in his education, whether he is going up in his performance or going down." Mr. James

"What I have experienced is that daily my children write whatever is being given at school, and I have to see that improvement is there." Mr. Jabulani

This distrust of teachers in private schools originated from attrition rates at the

school and from students' reports concerning teachers' teaching and assessment methods. Unfortunately, parents' perspective about qualification of private secondary school teachers was correct. These teachers enter the teaching profession because it is the easiest profession to get employment. This is the reality in many Sub-Saharan countries (Mkumbo, 2012). For many teachers, the teaching profession is seen as stepping-stones to other professions (Kruijer, 2010; Mkumbo, 2012). However, Kampango made efforts to employ qualified subject teachers.

3. *Providing Structure at Home.* Other parents provided structure at home. The practical measures included reducing children's chores to ensure there was enough time for study; waking up children in the morning to avoid punishment for being tardy—the punishment was being sent home for the day; providing food to ensure the children did not go hungry at school; and controlling media (cell phones and TV viewing) usage as an incentive for good performance or punitive measure for poor grades.

I make sure she does not have chores at home.” Mrs. Chulu

But for students who live with parents especially girls have to cook and do other chores at the house. So, this period, 8 o'clock to 9 o'clock, we give the child chance to read. We make sure that the child studies. Mr. Tumani

Since he is not my son, it is sometimes difficult to advise him because I do not want him to think I am harsh. However, I try to encourage him to study by making sure that he is not too busy with work at the house. Mr. Kalulu

In the morning, I wake up the children. Then I tell them to cook food that they take to school, and they have breakfast after I tell them to be early so they do not get punished because when they are doing the punishment, they miss classes. It is important to be early so that they can be with their peers learning what the teacher has prepared for them. Mr. Mabelu

4. *Following the School Study Program.* Other parents encouraged their children to follow the school's study program for boarders. Families who lived close to the school sent their children to join the boarders for study in the evenings.

Oh, yes, last term the girl was not doing well at all. Since we started sending them for study time, I am not getting complaints from the teachers. In fact, my wife also wakes them up at 3:00 am in some mornings to study. 3:00 am is the time students who are boarders are woken up to study. We felt that we should also do the same to ensure that the children do well. Mr. Naga

I try to follow the same plan they have at the school for boarders. They have study time at 6:00 pm and, therefore, since I live close to the school, I send my children to do prep with the other students. The study finishes at 8:00 pm and I send a relative to go and walk with them back home. Also, I try to follow their 3:00 am study time. I wake up my children to study in the morning or to finish their homework. Mr. Phiri

I do not let them go for the study. Although we live close by, we actually live in town and there are dangers for children to walk to school at odd times like that, so I follow the program at home. Mr. Molele

5. *Assisting With Homework.* Data analysis also revealed how children were assisted with assignments at home. College-educated parents, white-collar professionals or teachers provided direct one-on-one assistance or simply checked the assignments. Other parents engaged the assistance of children's siblings or friends; while some engaged tutors. The following comments represent their reports on how they assisted their children.

My profession, I am an engineer, so my children know that anything to do with Physical Science or Math, they can come to me. I also give them access to some of my books. In fact, afterwards she would always give me feedback and say, 'Dad, I am able to transfer this knowledge to my friends as well.' Mr. Banda

"I told her older sister who is in college at the Polytechnic to assist her in some of the subjects." Mrs. Ndirande

"I help my children with mathematics. Where they are weak, I have to assist them, if I cannot manage to assist them; I actually look for part-time teachers who can assist them." Mr. Pole

On the contrary, some children were denied a better home environment and positive reinforcement because of the parents' educational and socio-economic status.

Three reasons were attributed to why parents failed to assist their children with homework: a) educated parents found the process burdensome for they lacked the time to navigate unfamiliar syllabi and learn the material before assisting the children. Mrs.

Mbale shared the following:

I don't help them with any subjects because a lot of what they do needs time for me to read and understand and, therefore, I just encourage them and ask them about the subjects they are having problems with. If they tell me it is mathematics, I tell them that mathematics needs a lot of practice and I encourage them to work on the math. If they have friends, they should go and study with them. Mrs. Mbale

b) the curricula were beyond the capability of parents who did not complete high school; in addition, c) the children's attitude deterred parents from helping. For example, Mrs. Bota indicated that her child "*feels that I do not know much. The children would rather listen to and use the teachers' methods. If I use the same method, the child argues.*"

Three different studies offer confirmation of these findings on parents' hand-to-hand assistance with homework. Halle (2002) established that college-educated parents spent about four times a week talking to their children or assisting them with assignments. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001, 2005) elaborated several factors that contribute to parents' involvement in homework to include, but not limited to: a) parent's efficacious belief in their ability to assist their children; and b) children's invitation for assistance. Mapp (2003) discovered that parents were unable to give their children feedback because they neither had the skills for assisting the children nor understood the assignments.

Interestingly enough, parents with financial means who were unable to assist their children used tutors instead. Rather than requesting teachers to review lessons, a few of the Kampango parents preferred paying tutors. Evidently, Kampango parents had weak social ties with the educators, if the school had allowed parents to make suggestions, it is

possible day scholars could have had better academic assistance. Perna and Titus (2005) suggest that when individuals are unable to close the social network gap, the individuals are forced to seek new social networks that can help them.

Parental Support of Orphans and Social Orphans

Some guardians who were culturally obliged to look after their disadvantaged relatives discussed the topic of orphans and social orphans. The data revealed two trends associated with the children living with relatives in town. On one hand, some guardians did not care much about the children's wellbeing (Uncaring Guardians); on the other hand, some children exhibited negative attitude towards their guardians (Ward's Poor Attitude Toward Guardians).

Uncaring Guardians

Administrators first mentioned the care of orphans when they discussed guardians' participation. They pointed out that Parental Involvement in children's education was closely associated with the type of relationship a guardian had with the child. They highlighted the negative relationship between guardians and orphans or social orphans.

One of the major problems that we have with our student/parent relationship is that direct parental-link. Most of our students here, are not sponsored by their parents. They are sponsored by relatives or some charities. Because they are not direct parents, the encouragement is not really there. What they think is, as long I am feeding him at home, as long as I am sponsoring him at school, people at home will be able to say, 'I have done my part.' Teacher Pendapenda

As my friend has pointed out, they feel like these people should not be so directly involved in their matters. So, a cousin, a brother, a sister, or any relative would not necessarily poke into the affairs of the child especially when it comes to education, because the student will say that 'I am free, why you always chide me?' Teacher Manu

Once given this information, I decided to pursue this issue and I interviewed participants to understand the depth of this problem. I discovered that many of the parents were guardians of orphans and social orphans and often had difficulties providing appropriate home-based support. Mr. Kalulu shared his struggle with his social orphan.

“Since he is not my son, it is sometimes difficult to advise him because I do not want him to think I am harsh.” Mr. Kalulu

The inclusion of orphans and social orphans as an emergent theme is appropriate because of Malawian cultural traditions of extended family and the prevalence of Human-Immunodeficiency-Virus (HIV) and Acquired-Immunodeficiency-Syndrome (AIDS) deaths resulting in masses of orphans (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2007). Malawi has about 530,000 AIDS orphans (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS], 2016). Social orphans are children whose parents are unable to care for them or have abandoned them because of drugs or alcohol (*Wikipedia*, 2016). I use the term ‘social orphans’ because it is culturally appropriate and often mutually beneficial for children to live with relatives even though their parents are alive. Either the relative will request the child live with them to assist with chores or they will accept the child whose parents have no means for providing education (Chirwa, 2002; Meinert, 2003). Often parents send their children to stay with relatives in town because urban schools have better educational resources (qualified teachers, textbook, labs) than rural schools (Meinert, 2003).

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) chronosystem (passage of time) includes change or consistency in the child’s environment over time. These changes such as divorce, deaths, unemployment, transfers or migration can affect the child’s development. Moving them

to live with extended family may not be to the children's advantage. Studies have shown that children are better off growing up with maternal parents if they are alive rather than living with guardians. Literature shows that there is no significant change in children living with mothers (Coneus, Muhlenweg, & Stichnoth, 2014). Conversely, male guardians who are not related to orphans or social orphans provide little or no support to the vulnerable children.

There is evidence from literature that orphans and non-orphans living with relatives away from their parents have lower school attendance and often drop out of school (Chirwa, 2002; McBride, 2001, 2004; Shimamura, 2016; Smiley, 2011; Terway, Dooley & Smiley, 2012). Terway et al. (2012) studied Tanzanian orphans and confirmed that orphans who lived with close relatives such as grandparents had a better chance of obtaining an education school than those who lived with guardians who refused to take on the parental role. The researchers suggested that children living with extended families "had significantly higher out of school rates than children living with their parents" (p. 11).

According to Chirwa (2002), orphans cease to be children when they reach 18 years old. Society believes the child is grown-up and can care for himself; therefore, the extended family's responsibility is withdrawn. The guardians' treatment of these children is partial compared to the treatment given to their offspring. Guardians become neglectful and refuse to intervene in orphans' affairs. Consequently, the orphans lag behind in education and complete secondary education in their early twenties, later than their contemporaries (Coneus et al., 2014; Shimamura, 2016; Smiley, 2011).

Ward's Poor Attitude Toward Guardians

Parents and teachers decried orphans and social orphans' attitudes toward their guardians. They indicated that guardians cautiously interacted or avoided interaction with these adolescents because of the volatile nature of their feelings.

So, if you try to talk an orphan in Malawi, they think that every time that you are checking on them, you are violating their rights because their parents are not alive. When questioned, they respond 'You are mistreating me because I am an orphan. If my parents were alive, they would not have asked me what I have done at school.' Teacher Kwada

"They are my half-brothers and they don't want to listen to me. They argue a lot and give unsatisfactory answers because they do not want to study. I have to persist in ensuring they go for prep." Mr. Dzuka

Guardian deficient relationships with the children, whether it is because of children's behavior or guardians' neglect of the children, often result in a socialization deficiency which in turn, leads to lack of cultural and social capital in terms of placing a high value on education to facilitate better academic performance.

Section III: Educators' Perspectives on Parental Involvement

Eleven educators who participated in the teachers' focus group were critical of parents' seemingly inadequate efforts and lack of interest in their children's education. They believed that parents expected the school to perform "educational achievement miracles" on the low-academic performing students. The following section delineates teachers' perception of parents' involvement and the discussion is organized as follows:

1. Losing Control of Adolescents (Lack of control because the children are adolescents)
2. Failing to Get Involved Due to Poverty (Impact of poverty)

3. Expecting the School to Perform Educational Achievement Miracles.

Failing to Take Responsibility

The proprietors and all educators except one teacher described parents as disengaged because they (parents) were busy. This, they believed, reflected parents' attitude which manifested itself in their practice and lack of visibility at school. The educators expressed their concerns thus:

Parents have been summoned . . . but parents have shown almost 0.01% of interest in education of their children. The school has taken steps, Madam, I can assure you on individual levels, individual students have been summoned with their parents, but what happens, the parent would not come, would send a boy even younger than the offender to chip in. So, parents really have been given enough opportunity to take on this involvement, but they have demonstrated that their children do not need help. . . . Just this past academic year, I invited parents just for discussion. It's only about 5, if not 4, who turned up. Now that should be a picture of how involved parents are in the education of their children. . . . Sense of responsibility is lacking in the parents. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

"If you look at kids who don't do well in the class, some of us, we don't even know their parents. We know their younger sisters, elder sisters, or brothers." Teacher Kwada

Another complaint from educators was parents' busy schedules. The data shows that the teachers' views were not unfounded. Validation of this view came from some of the parents who pointed out their predicament due to time constraints.

I am busy being a teacher as well. I also spend much time at work and it usually difficult for me to go and meet the teachers and I don't have time to sit down with my wards to discuss the problems they are facing at school. Mr. Chache

"I am normally a busy person, I normally come late home, and to sacrifice time to go to the school where my children go is somehow difficult." Mr. Thokoza

"My problem is that I am very busy. I am all alone and I do not find time to assist her." Mrs. Ndirande

Teachers perceived that parents' response of being busy was just a ruse to avoid involvement. One of the teachers contentiously explained that teachers are willing to sacrifice their time to work with parents even though they are also busy. They seemed to imply that if teachers were putting time into teaching the children, parents should also sacrifice time for their children. However, parents' lack of involvement, as seen from their comments, was due to being overstretched working to find tuition while trying to support their parents. Time constraints resulted in the inability to academically socialize children about school, thus providing deficient social and cultural capital (Lareau, 1987; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Nevertheless, not all parents fit the teachers' perspective of uninterested parents. Some parents were concerned for their children's success and initiated contact with the school. The data shows that seven participants who realized that their children were not doing well in school took the initiative to contact teachers to discuss students' performance. These following comments contradict the teachers' assertions about parents' inability to monitor their children's school progress.

Yes, I have George and he used to be a quite bright student, but I think at some point something went wrong because he was too comfortable getting too much money and getting into bad company. I spoke to the class teacher and headmasters to look closely at the kid, make sure he is doing whatever he should be doing in the class he is studying, and maybe given some extra work to make sure that he is working and not spending his free time loitering around, just doing nothing. Mr. Bemba

"Whenever I see that there is low performance in the work of my children, I do consult with the subject teacher, the class teacher, especially to tell me what problems they face with my children." Mr. Jusab

"Not necessarily just to follow her up, but if there are any signs of problems, I do. I would contact the teachers to hear from their side what the issues are." Mr. Ali

“I do talk to the child myself, and sometimes go to. . . I do visit the teachers to assist to do some counseling with the child. That is what I do. Mrs. Kapinga

Losing Control of Adolescents

Teachers believed that parents had a laissez faire attitude towards their children. There was implication that parents lacked skills for parenting their adolescent children.

I would prefer if the parents would still stick to their responsibility that they make follow-up of the ward, maybe up to the end of the college life if possible, may be at least until their ward completes Form 4. Teacher Pendapenda

It seems in the homes the kids are too free. The parents have lost control of their children. They don't tell the children when to study, and what to do at what time. The kids, when they leave school, it seems when they knock off from school, they have left the books. They will deal with the books again the next day when they come from school. In fact, there is that lack of follow up. Even though school gets out at 3, and girls arrives home at 6, the parents won't take the initiative to call to try and find out where the girl was. Teacher Mkwezalamba

But as children are growing up, parents feel that their children are becoming responsible to take care of themselves for whether it is education or whatever. They feel the child is grown up enough to decide and to reason for himself. So, they will not poke their noses into the business of the students at school. So, the students are left free. Teacher Kwada

However, the notion that parents are losing control of their children may be an exaggeration because it was clear that parents had not abdicated their responsibilities. They were simply having difficulties socializing the children due to time constraints and the children's negative attitudes toward parents and toward schooling itself. Parents explained children did not value education.

As a parent, you want your child to learn, but you find that the child is not interested in education. Yet as a parent you see that your child is not doing well in school. But for the student has problems understanding that she is not doing well and her future may be bleak. Mrs. Mbale

Another challenge is the students themselves. What attitude do they have when they go to school? Some go to school because their parents tell them to go to school. They themselves don't know the importance of school and of education

and they come to school with a negative attitude. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

Adolescent developmental crises could also have contributed to children's attitudes. During adolescence, peer relationships are very important. Data in the present study shows that parents constantly battled peer influences that negatively interfered with their instructions. There is an interrelationship between peer influences with hegemonic Western influences. Families and teachers seemed to associate peers' attitudes and lifestyles with the assimilation of popular Western culture—TV and videos, as the following statements indicate.

The young people connect with each other during these times. When they leave school, they meet with their friends. When they get home, they put their books away and take that time to go with their friends to watch movies. It is difficult sometimes to monitor their movements, but still if I am home, it is easy to talk to them. Mr. Mphwechi

I can tell my children to study, but sometimes they have friends who interest them in other things who promote other activities outside of the home or school other than studying and the children can sneak away from the house and they tell you that they have to do an important thing and they will read later. Mr. Molele

The young people connect with each other during these times. When they leave school, they meet with their friends. When they get home, they put their books away and take that time to go with their friends to watch movies. It is difficult sometimes to monitor their movements, but still If I am home it is easy to talk to them. I talk to them as children that have brains. Mr. Mphwechi

Despite parents' commitment to assist their children, the youth in some families continued to negate parents' advice. Some parents responded to these difficulties by either deferring to relatives for help as Mr. Kalulu explained, "*I have a relative, whenever there are difficulties, I usually refer such to him so that he puts it right to the kid,*" or by using philosophical reasoning to rationalize the children's actions, especially for those who shirk their school responsibilities.

But as a parent you try to help the child if the child understands her situation, but sometimes the child does not understand and as a parent you feel as if you are

just wasting your time. Sometimes the children are defiant and do not want to listen to you. Mrs. Champiti

However, even if I forced them to go and study, they can pretend that they are studying and just sit without doing anything. If they don't want to study, they will not study; they will ignore your encouragement. It is up to child to want to read, only then will they actually study. Mr. Mphewchi

In literature, the adolescence period is marked by identity crisis (Erikson, 1968) and is challenging to parents (Patrikakaou, 2008). During this period the adolescent has a need for approval from peers and adults, a need for parental interaction and emotional support, a need for autonomy, and a need for personal development (Erikson 1968, Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Conflict between parents and adolescents can arise as adolescents seek freedom and autonomy at the expense of their parents' displeasure. Sometimes parents' innocent attempts to converse about education or household chores can be perceived by the adolescent as censure (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Parents and teenagers have to navigate these transitions. It is during this time that parents believe their adolescents do not need much supervision; they are old enough (Eccles & Harold, 1996). However, the involvement of parents at the secondary school level has been found to positively affect adolescent educational achievement (Eccles, 2007; Patrikakou et al., 2005).

The ubiquitous spread of Western media has affected young people in Malawi. Even in rural areas, there are entertainment kiosks populated by young people who have an appetite for Western music, videos and films. The media portrays what young people aspire for—class status. They assimilate the culture and live vicariously through the videos. In homes that have electricity, these videos and TV are a distraction to studying. Sometimes parents restrict their use so children can study. Children who are denied TV and videos at home are lured to the kiosks with the encouragement of peers.

Failing to Get Involved Due to Poverty

Teachers understood that Parental Involvement hinges on financial support of the children. During the focus group session, teachers discussed two poverty related factors that affect children's education: Poor home environment; and Inability to provide education-related resources.

1. *Poor home environment.* Teachers also credited the home environment for exacerbating students' problems. Lack of basic services such as electricity meant the student could not study once they got home. In addition, female students were expected to do chores, such as fetching water and cooking when they arrived home from school because parents "*when they come home late; they want to find everything done by the student,*" Headmaster Limba. Other teachers stated,

To add to the issue of poverty, you find out that when the kids have been released from school and when they get home, they find a pile of work to be done, thereby making them drop the books and concentrate on the work (chores) and by the end of the day they find themselves to be so tired that they cannot concentrate on the books. Teacher Khethe

It is poverty. Yes, we are living in town but, how many people are living in a house with electricity? Our gas stations are dry, no gasoline, no whatever, so they go home, they find dependent on a candle. The child cannot do his or her homework with a candle. So, the guardian will force the kid to sleep, in so doing they are not going to do the homework. In addition, children arrive home late; they can't work at night because they do not have light. So, the parents really are not so much involved in the affairs of their children's education. Teacher Kwada

2. *Inability to provide education-related resources.* Parents who were struggling with school fees found it difficult to provide their children with resources such as transport money and textbooks. Unlike government schools which provided textbooks to students, and CDSS that accessed affordable textbooks using the Danida-funded Education Project that rents textbooks to students (World Bank, 2008), private secondary schools like Kampango provided no textbooks. Teacher Saulosi stated, "*Parents have to*

buy the children some materials, like books. There are a lot of students who fail to buy books for the class.”

Poverty also affected students’ ability to concentrate in school. Those who walked to school were tired before classes began. In addition, they often got home late after school and were unable to focus on assignments. Teacher Saulosi concluded, *“If most of the parents had cars, they would have driven their children straight to school and after school picked them up, but somehow to walk 10 kilometers is hard.”*

Teachers also associated parents’ lack of academic socialization at home to poor infrastructure in the country. The majority of parents got home from work after dark because of the unreliable of public transport. None of the parents described their home environment. However, I observed that the houses surrounding the school had no electricity. Day scholars could not compete with children from higher income brackets who had resources, good home environment, were in the boarding school or were driven to school by their parents. Mr. Masamba summarized barriers to Parental Involvement thus, *“It is the economic factor, the culture factor, parent and child interaction, social distance, and children’s attitude.”*

Consistent with literature, socio-economic status and level of education have been found to affect Parental Involvement and children’s academic performance (Davis-Kean, 2005; Dufur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2013; Lareau, 1987; Quagliata, 2008; Rothstein, 2004; Vellymalay, 2012). Financial constraints reduce poor parents’ effectiveness in providing resources and in finding time for monitoring their children. On the contrary, literature shows that educated parents are more likely to be involved in their children’s education at home (Kurth-Schai & Green, 2006; Okemwa, 2014). Coleman (1988) simply states that

financial capital “provides the physical resources that can aid in achievement: a fixed place in the home for studying, (and) materials to aid learning” (Coleman, 1988, p. S109).

Expecting School to Perform Educational Achievement Miracles

Educators asserted that parents “dumped” their children at the school expecting the school to perform miracles in the children’s educational outcomes (academic and behavioral outcomes). They assumed that parents who had money would rather send their children to boarding schools to avoid dealing with children’s poor behavior.

In addition, the proprietor indicated that parents brought to the schoolchildren who had been rejected by other schools, had failed JCE or MSCE and could not repeat at the school, or were expelled from school because of bad behavior. His perception was that parents enrolled their children at the school because it was the teachers’ responsibility to motivate students to be more studious and better behaved. In the teachers’ focus-group session and in separate individual interviews, proprietors, administrators and teachers used the words “mediocre,” “rejects,” “hopeless” and “abnormal” to refer to students of low academic performance or delinquent behavior. The above adjectives describing underperforming students were associated with other action verbs, adjectives and nouns such as “dumping,” “dumping ground,” “working miracles” and “rehabilitation centers.” The use of the present continuous verb “dumping” may also have referred to the influx of students into private schools because they were not selected into government secondary schools (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

The ubiquitous use of the same negative labels seemed to be cliché originating from staff room discussions between the proprietors and the educators regarding the

quality of students enrolled at the school and the apparent parental non-involvement. The following passages are examples of the administrators and educators' negative attitudes toward parents and their children.

The children we have are really the mediocre ones, the ones nobody wants. . . . The kids that have come here are rejects from the government. At the same time, the parents and the guardians expect us to create a miracle out of these kids. . . . These are the children who failed to get into government secondary schools, or they went to government secondary school, failed their JC, or failed their MSCE. The parents still say, "What are we going to do with him? Let him just repeat." So, they send him to us because the government will not take them. Also, those that have been kicked out from good schools maybe because of discipline, or maybe because of thieving. The parent says, "Since they chased you out of school, are you just going to stay home? Let me take you to this school." And those parents, they consider the child a nuisance to have around the home, so they want to find someplace where they can dump them. Those are the kinds of students we get. And they are highly unmotivated. . . . You actually have to drive them to work, yes. As a result, we overstretch ourselves to try and make these people work. Because if we do not, they will not study the books. They are interested in fun more than business. Yes, those are the kinds of students we get. Proprietor Dule

Many parents send us difficult children. They know the child will be difficult at school. They still send the child. Yes, they send the child to school so that the teacher will shape the child. When the child misbehaves and you call the parents, they say, 'Oh please help me with the child, discipline him; he is difficult.' We do not know that they have tried and failed to discipline the child and they are leaving the child to us. . . . We need to work on those hopeless cases. Headmaster Limba

The reality is that some parents think that schools are dumping grounds for what you call it, outlaws, children who have some problems (troublesome) in the homes. Parents would feel relieved if their children went to school, whether they operated as a day scholar or as a boarder. As long as the child is not at home, the parents are at peace. That's why parents wouldn't even follow up to check whether the child is gone to school or not. We have a problem in Malawi. We don't have rehabilitation centers, so parents send us abnormal children. When they are invited to come, they automatically think that their ward has violated regulations or school rules and they will feel ashamed to come and answer charges on behalf of the child. . . . Maybe I should have clarified that point. They think the school will just perform a miracle without making a follow up. If they were making a follow up, it wouldn't be a dumping ground. It becomes a dumping ground because, if you dump something, you don't go and see what you have thrown away into the bin. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

"That's why I am giving the idea that they should not dump their wards; they

should not bring them to us.” Teacher Mkwezalamba

There are three reasons why parents enrolled (dumped) their children at the school and expected the school to perform miracles on children who otherwise would not have completed secondary school.

1. The school was playing an important role in reducing the accessibility gap to secondary education especially for the students who did not score well on national examinations.

2. Parents were under a lot of pressure to ensure that children succeeded in secondary school because if the child failed, there were almost no second chances. The examination-oriented education negatively affected students’ aspirations and the MSCE often spelled doom for many young people. Children’s hopes of potentially holding a job and securing a bright future were uncertain (Henry, Nyanga, & Oundo, 2014).

Nevertheless, parents paid higher tuition (at this school compared to government schools) even though they were aware that about 10% of those who completed high school made it into college (Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, 2014). For example, of the 78,524 who sat the MSCE in 2006, only 38.85% (30,510) passed. Out of these, only 6346 students (21%) were enrolled in the UNIMA (MoEST, 2008). The situation would not have been dire if there were other outlets for those not selected to college. But the employment sector in Malawi is was too small to absorb the students who are not selected to college.

3. Parents trusted the school and hoped their children would be the exception to this gloomy picture. A few private schools in Malawi were trusted because they outperformed government schools. In 2006, private schools had a 50% MSCE pass rate against a 40% pass rate in government and government-aided schools (World Bank,

2010). Although not all students at this school passed the MSCE, Kampango's reputation was better than other schools for student selection to the UNIMA.

Two participants openly expressed their appreciation concerning the school's efforts in ensuring that students pass. Mr. Makani narrated an experience he had with the school when the headmaster encouraged his son not to drop a class. He was given advice on how to assist his child at home, and the child passed with good grades on the national examination. Mr. Makani concluded, "*I know the teachers at this school know how to help students to do well. There is a difference between what my child was before and what he is now.*" Mr. Donda talked about his son who had matriculated from the school:

The oldest only had a general pass when he sat for the primary examination. When he came here and met with the teachers and started studying for himself, he passed with 27 points. It shows that the school is doing its best to help the children, especially when the children study.

4. Most of the parents interviewed did not have the skills for influencing academic achievement and had no clue as to how to assist their children with assignments.

5. Other parents preferred the school because of its infrastructure. They compared Kampango's school structures to what was available in other private schools.

We know some school structures are renovated beer houses and the names changed from a bar to private school. Many people did not like this. But this school is well developed. We only knew few private schools which prospered such as Phwezi, Central High, etc. Now we have come to trust this school. Mr. Thomu

6. Some parents genuinely believed the school had appropriate regulations for moral development and that teachers had proven strategies for working with adolescents.

Parents' expectations of the role of teachers in shaping children's lives were not unfounded. Studies have shown that teachers' support and influence over high school students is important in reducing behavioral problems (Brewster & Bowen, 2004), in

reducing dropout rates and enhancing students' opportunity to graduate (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). In addition, relationships between low socioeconomic status (SES) students and their teachers have been correlated with students' confidence and self-esteem in academics (Wentzel, 2002, 2003).

Nevertheless, parents trusted the school because they had invested in the school and expected it to take care of their children. Just like cultural capital and social capital are integrated as a way of life in rural Malawian society and in the township outskirts of the city where the day scholars lived, the culture informed how social capital was operationalized. Even though most of these parents had some education, the palimpsest of culture still remained where parents continued to believe that they were not the only ones raising the children (transmitting cultural capital). Teachers were part of the community that participated in the upbringing of the children, "It takes a village to raise a child." Durkheim (1893/1984) calls this "mechanical solidarity" (p. 2) which Emirbayer (2003), defines as "collective responsibility" (p. 65)—all within the community share beliefs and values and work together in order to accomplish shared goals. Thus, parents and teachers had one shared goal of ensuring children were academically successful.

Section IV: Isolating Parents

In 2006, the male proprietor discussed his efforts to involve parents because he believed their involvement would benefit the school. He specifically wanted the involvement of parents to ensure that parents and teachers were united in dealing with behavioral issues, thus through communication between the school and parents, there would be an intergenerational closure. The proprietor believed the relationship with the

parents would curb students' misbehavior. In our first interview, he shared his thoughts about Parental Involvement.

Most students don't want their parents to know what they do in school, especially if what they do is bad. When we call the parents, and both us and the parents talk to the child together, the student realizes that now he has nowhere to run to . . . he cannot go to the parents and seek solace there by cheating the parents, because the parents know exactly what kind of student he is and here at the school he cannot cheat us by making us believe that whatever he is doing has the blessing of his parents because he knows that we have dealt with the parents. So, the student knows that there is nowhere to run to. We found out that it has a very positive effect on the student. They change and you can see the change. The U-turn is quite visible. Proprietor Dule

However, he faced opposition from the community when parents refused the school to widen the road from the main road through the village to the school. The proprietor attributed their resentment to illiteracy.

The community here is not very friendly. Actually, it started from feelings of jealousy, partly from the fact that most of the people that surround us are not educated themselves and so they don't really appreciate what we do here. Proprietor Dule

Within a period of five years the school had expanded physically and doubled in enrollment. With this type of school expansion, it was not surprising when in 2011 the proprietor revealed his shift in perspective. Whereas in 2006, he had been supportive of Parental Involvement, in 2011 he was opposed to routine Parental Involvement and only invited parents to deal with crises so that teachers would focus on academics.

The school doesn't have a chance to open up to the parents. I feel the school is centered and concentrated on the children. Our time must be thrown to the education of the children. There is very little room for parents. The school cannot cancel classes . . . and say we are leaving it for the parents to come. The school has to finish the syllabus which is too long for that matter, and within a short period of time, and that is a challenge. Deliberately, we keep parents and guardians outside our sphere of work. We definitely work with the students, so that partnership is between the members of the staff: the teachers and the students. We have our school syllabus, and we have our examination syllabus, and we just work with that. Proprietor Dule

Such acknowledgement of the male proprietor's perspectives on Parental Involvement revealed his vision for the school and the ideology of isolating parents. This declaration proved to be the most dominant force that influenced the trajectory of the school's actions and practices concerning Parental Involvement. The proprietors exuded power over the management and school operations resulting in a top-down administration model. Although the teachers would have wanted some Parental Involvement, it would have been impossible for the school to implement parent-teacher collaboration when the proprietors were opposed to the idea.

From the data, the isolation of parents is presented in three themes: Relinquishing the Idea of a PTA, a discussion of the school's intentional decisions not to have a PTA; Strategizing Schooling as a Business, examines participants' perceptions that the school was a business entity; and, Intentioning Better Academic Achievement Without Families' Participation, discusses the school's intentions to focus on academics rather than on Parental Involvement.

Relinquishing the Idea of a PTA

Data analysis showed parents' desires for establishing a PTA but the proprietors were not interested in a PTA. The school had a school board comprised of the proprietors' family: the husband, the wife and their children. Consequently, the Kampango parents neither had voice in the school's management nor influence decisions pertaining to the students' well-being. Furthermore, the teachers had no power for implementing what the proprietor had not sanctioned. Only the proprietor had the full jurisdiction to prescribe policies, standards and regulations pertaining to the running of the school. Although the proprietors initially tried to form a PTA, their vision for the

school shifted to raising students' academic performance without wasting teachers' time dealing with parents. In my last interview, the proprietor stated,

There was a time we used to involve parents and guardians and we had a PTA, and we called for meetings where we would discuss issues, but we quickly discovered that most of the parents did not quite understand the education environment of today. They did not understand that the kids we are dealing with today are different than the kids of yesterday. . . . It is possible they expect us to send those kids to the university and so we discovered that if we worked according to what the parents were looking for, given the kind of material we have, the kids of today, we are not going to achieve the goal of making these children pass so well so that they can get to the university. So, we decided that it was most important both to us and to the parents to develop these kids to pass and if possible send them to the university. So, that became our number one goal. In order to achieve that, we caused everything else that does not directly address that goal to be kicked aside and one of those were the parents themselves. The parents had to be kicked aside so we could focus on the kids and work with the kids. Since that time every year the number of kids that go to the university keeps on growing. Proprietor Dule

Despite the proprietors' paradigm shift, parents were still in favor of a PTA for several reasons:

1. By virtue of their financial investments, they had a stake in the school and could contribute to its development. The development of a PTA was necessary for developing relationship with the school. The following quotations highlight parents' perspective about the establishment of PTA at the school.

He built and developed this school because of our children and he needs to develop relationships with the parents. If we became angry, the children would not come to this school. The school is not his, it is ours. He should accept that he developed this school with us in mind and, therefore, he should work with us to support him. If he puts other rules, we can understand them with discussion. Sometimes in collaborating with parents, parents may have suggestions and input for developing the school. If there is relationship between the parents and the proprietor, there will be checks and balances for developing a strong school and parents may provide wisdom concerning the school. Mr. Fodya

Nevertheless, parents were aware of the difficulties of establishing a PTA at a private school.

“The idea of a PTA is good because the problems that parents face would have a platform for discussing them. But in a school like this, the owner decides.” Mr. Thomu

“It is good to have a PTA. But we may not have a PTA because the proprietor developed this school himself. A PTA can be organized but he decides what he wants.”

Mr. Sadziwika

“When they say private secondary school, we think private means the proprietor does anything he wants. Parents want to know what the goal of the school is and they can see how they can fit into it.” Mr. Donda

2. A PTA would have been an avenue for addressing and negotiating issues individual parents could not solve. They delineated several issues that needed addressing through a formal organization, issues which individual parents had little or no power for negotiating changes. The issues included tuition policies such as the arbitrary increase of fees; illogical suspension and expulsion rules, for example, expelling students without parents’ knowledge; teacher-student relationships; and, monitoring incompetent teachers.

These issues are listed in the following quotes:

If there was a PTA, parents would be able to discuss these things and together with the school find solutions, things like considering the parents’ perspective on tuitions and fees. Often some parents have difficulties finding funds. So, I really think it would help if we had a PTA. . . . In addition, when the students are late, they hang around the fence for a long time. All of them are sent home. Yet this is a private school, they could easily get the children inside the gates into the school and find some type of punishment for them instead of sending them home. These students leave home with the intention of going to learn because their parents have paid the fees. If there was a PTA, some of these things could be discussed. There can be as many as 50 students sent home when they are late. Should these students go home and do nothing when they should be preparing for examinations? Mrs. Mbale

Some of the girls were expelled without parents knowing and we do not know the reason. The fact that these girls were expelled because they were eloping and it is often because of misbehavior. This is why it is important for parents to meet with the school to discuss things in PTA meetings. Mr. Makani

What about teacher-student relationships that we see outside? We, parents, can do something instead of saying, "This is a private school, we cannot say anything." The PTA will give us the authority to be able to get involved in making the school better. Mr. Fodya

3. Parents were interested in PTA as a measure for monitoring teachers' performance and for establishing relationships with other parents.

Some teachers only work for the money they receive at the end of the month. They are not teachers and are not concerned about the progress of the students or the exam results and often blame the parents for the poor performance of the child. It is important for the parents to meet with other parents and teachers. Even though the teacher may be unhappy because parents are monitoring the progress of their child, this will force the teacher to be concerned about the school results without blaming the parents. This will also cause the teacher to work hard to ensure the school has a very good academic reputation. With the parents getting involved, the teachers may be afraid that the parents will be unhappy and work harder. It is important that there is fire (pressure) for progress to take place. Mr. Donda

Educators recognized the need for a PTA at the school. Eight out of the nine teachers indicated their preference to establish a PTA at the school. They understood however, that establishing a PTA at a private school would be daunting due to the sheer number of parents. This was a task that would take time and the school would have to initiate it. To this end the educators assented:

I really believe what your ideas if we started a PTA. I can tell you now that I understand about a PTA, that it does help. First let me talk about fees. As a private institution, even government institutions, they run on fees. I believe the problem comes because we chase children to go and get fees at the wrong time according to parents. Therefore, having a PTA would help us sort these issues and you would know directly that if you have problems you would come to us and approach us or send us a letter. We know parents are concerned about their children. Headmaster, Mr. Semu

It should be deliberately put in place by the schools themselves [the girls section and boys section. The school should make efforts to involve the parents, how they can initiate or how they can operate their kids, their wards if they put them in day school. I know schools that don't have a PTA have a breakdown of communication between the parents and the school. If the school can initiate a PTA, there can be progress. Teacher Lendati

It's not just a matter of setting up there and the same day we are OK. I think it is

going to take some time. I think the first thing the school has to do, is to have a PTA . . . that should be the first step and I think organizing that, of course it would be difficult for those coming from far, but I think we also have relationships here that can act as guardian representatives. Teacher Chakudya

Putnam (2000) asserts that a PTA is a formalized “bridging” social capital where both the school and parents (diverse groups) work together to address educational issues. As confirmed in this study, the lack of a PTA isolated parents and promoted social inequality. Parents were denied networking with both educators and with other parents. Consequently, the lack of transparency caused misunderstanding and distrust between the educators and parents. The PTA would have provided the networks between parents and parents, and teachers with parents. Through this social capital, parents and teachers would acquire knowledge and information necessary for assisting children, in so doing closing the intergenerational gap (Coleman, 1988) between parents and between parents and educators. Furthermore, the PTA would have been a channel for bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) for the development of viable relations between parents and between teachers and parents.

Before concluding this section on PTA, it is important to note that literature suggests that PTAs in private schools cannot assume the role of internal financial auditors, because private schools receive no subsidies from the governments, but rely on tuition and fees for school operations. Ugwulashi and Archibong (2012) assert, “All the proceeds belong to the entrepreneur who owns the school” (p. 108). Even though some of the parents were proposing that the establishment of a PTA would help them monitor school fees, they did not have the prerogative to influence the proprietor’s decisions on tuition and fees. The role of the PTA’s in private schools is to promote parent-school partnership where both parents and teachers are valued, to oversee the academic quality

of education, to ensure the improvement of learning outcomes, to advocate for parents who have no voice, and to support teachers (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Onderi & Makori, 2012; Ugwulashi & Archibong, 2012).

Strategizing Schooling as a Business

Kampango as a private school falls in the intermediate quality category of private schools which exist to serve those who need private education (Martinez-Mora, 2006). As an urban private school, it depended heavily on students' tuition and fees. However, many of the parents understood that the school was a business providing services to the community, and as a business, opportunities for parents to participate in the school were minimal. Mr. Donda captured what the other participants felt (as there was a chorus of agreement) when he stated, *"This particular school is a business entity . . . and, therefore, parents are not able to participate. It contributes to the community in that children are being educated, but at what cost to us!"*

Teachers in the focus-group meeting also concurred with the parents' understanding of the proprietors' school model. One teacher complained,

To call a spade a spade, it runs with money. The owner of the school needs money to run the school. That is, if the director is not very much concerned with money instead of the performance of the students, then we should begin to see many changes. By contrast, we would not see students in Form 1 and 2 coming in the middle of the term, or let them sit for exams when they have not been at this school for long. . . . But the problem is, he is worried much about money and he is willing to compromise. He wants to get more money. Teacher Mkwezalamba

Teachers supposed that the proprietor was willing to accept mediocre students as a way of increasing profits. Teachers' reasoning gave credence to the idea that apart from providing secondary education, the school existed for commerce. As indicated in the following quotes, the random enrollment of students including students of low academic

ability and the potential academic improvement of such students would bolster the school's reputation.

That is a marketing strategy. You take a product that you think the people think is hopeless, work on it, produce. People will say you have a better chance with your ward if you send him or her to such a school. The Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

Once the parents have paid the fees, they have supported the student financially, mentally, and physically. They expect the school to take over from there and work out miracles. I tell you some of the kids come here and you wonder how on earth this one is going to pass the MSCE. But that's where our bread and butter is. As a private school, our survival really, is on how well we can work out this miracle—how well we can make the least capable of our students to pass. If you can turn around that student from being a hopeless student to being a star, we are sure of a future. Proprietor Dule

Intentioning Better Academic Achievement Without Participation

The present data shows a trend that illustrates the intentionality of the school to raise the academic performance of students and to increase the MSCE passing rate without the participation of parents. The strategies for achieving these goals included employing qualified teachers and the availability of teaching and learning resources at the school. Of importance, however, was the implementation of four Strategies: “Excluding Families to Increase Pass Rates,” “Streaming to Increase Pass Rates,” “Using Boarding Facilities to Increase Pass Rates,” and “Providing Study Periods and Remedial Classes to Increase Pass Rate.”

Bob Egland (2007) defines intentioning as “mentally focusing on and visualizing what you want to achieve or attain” (urbandictionary.com/author.php?author=Bob+Egland). This intentioning of better academic-achievement miracles requires strategizing and acting upon the intentions. Unfortunately, such large student body numbers negate such a vision. In response to a parent, during the focus group, the Vice

Headmaster, Mr. Masamba described the situation at the school this way,

Mrs. Chulu said her child is not doing well. We should also think that in a class with 90 children, it is difficult for all the children to catch up. The teachers only concentrate on children who are quick to understand, and it is difficult for them to follow up the 6 or 10 children who are not doing well out of 90. We know Kampango is one of the best schools in Blantyre; therefore, parents want their children here at Kampango. We have three streams: A, B, C, and in each stream, you have 80 to 90 students. If a teacher is teaching math in these streams, it means he has 240 students. He will concentrate on 20 students out of the 240. Possibly, this is why your child, his child, and my child may not do well in that class because there is not follow up. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

1. *Excluding Families to Increase Pass Rates.* Performing miracles on low achieving students in this large school was a daunting uphill battle. Such feats require using a variety of strategies including student motivation, adequate resources, good instruction methods as well as Parental Involvement (Bennett et al., 2004). However, the proprietor was more concerned with the reputation of the school in relation to the number of students selected to the university.

Yes, actually the education system in Malawi is examination-oriented. No matter what the school does, if they don't send students to the university, no matter what the school has done, no one will respect that school. And that is just because we feel the value of white-collar jobs in the country. And so, every student wants to pass the exams and, if possible, they want to go to the university. And in Malawi, going to the university is a privilege; not many people have that opportunity. As a school, knowing pretty well that is what the students and the parents expect, we take that as our number one goal, making the students pass and, if possible, pass so well they go to the university. Proprietor Dule

Consequently, the proprietors' intentions were to isolate parents to give teachers enough time to concentrate on what he termed the 'technical side of education,' teaching students. He defined the social aspect of Parental Involvement as the hegemonic influence of Western education. He categorically stated that Parental Involvement in education is a foreign or Western untested and unproven idea not for the Malawi context.

It would be nice to involve the parents. But if we did that, we would not be able to have the time to be able to work with the students, to be able to work to the extent

to have these students pass. So, between the two we say, "Which one is more beneficial to the child and to the parents? Is it the social aspect or is it the technical aspect?" The technical aspect, that is where you make sure the child passes and goes to the university. The social aspect is where you say that this child is a social human being. Let's all work with him or her as a social human being. What pays off at the end of the day is that child passing and that child goes to the university. This forces us to neglect the human side and concentrate on the technical side. Here in Malawi it is different to what our friends in the developed countries had 50 years ago. Whatever they had that time which made them develop to what they have today, that is what we need here today. If we borrow so much what the West is today, we will be starting from a much higher level when we haven't laid the foundation, and we are going to collapse. We need to lay the foundation first and laying the foundation is not an easy enjoyable job; it is tough work. Proprietor Dule

One can sympathize with the proprietor's sentiments especially when education is in high demand and schools have to deliver. However, it is clear that the proprietor had not read literature about the benefits of Parental Involvement in improving educational outcomes. His understanding of Parental Involvement was based on traditional epistemology—a colonial mindset and the separation of parents and teachers' roles. Their decision to "kick-aside the parents," to concentrate on academics and to only relate to the students was their only plausible solution to increase their rate of MSCE output.

The decision to concentrate on academics only seemed to have been justified by the MSCE results. The male proprietor disclosed, *"This year alone, 57 kids have gone to the university."* The Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba, also pointed out, *"Nationwide we are Number 5, when it comes to producing junior certificate results and Malawi School certificate examination results and sending off students to the university."* Although Kampango had over 200 students pass the MSCE examination in 2010 (the school as an examination center had 450 students pass the exam), only 57 of the Kampango students had excelled enough to be selected to the university. When one considers the competition between schools to matriculate many students onto university, Kampango is to be

applauded. However, over 143 students who passed the exam at this school were trapped into either repeating Form 4 or quitting school altogether, because of either low passing grades or lack of places at the university.

2. *Streaming to Increase Pass Rates.* Due to the large body of students, Kampango decided to stream students according to abilities. This strategy enabled teachers to reach each level even though they concentrated on students who had the potential for passing the MSCE. However, involving parents in terms of school visitations for such a large student body would be complex. The Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba indicated that involving parents was no longer feasible.

Now it is difficult to arrange for many parents. We have so many children here, 400 to 500 who are day scholars now. To involve parents of 500 day scholars . . . we have limited time. We have to go to class. We have to administer the office. We have to do other national duties such as working on examinations, and all that together is against the little time, and time does not allow us. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

Large class sizes have their own drawbacks. Low attaining students in these environments often fall behind (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011; Schanzenbach, 2014). Studies do confirm that streaming large student groups serve the purpose of curbing student failures. Kilgour (2008) gives three reasons that support the practice of streaming namely, efficiency in teaching, helping students to reach academic potential, and limiting failures. One can surmise that Kilgour's reasons apply to Kampango.

3. *Using Boarding Facilities to Increase Pass Rates.* The school encouraged parents to put their children in the boarding facilities at the school where they could have access to learning materials, to extra tutorials from teachers, and assistance from fellow students. Both the proprietor and the headmasters discussed with me the importance of putting children in the boarding school to improve their probability of being selected to

the university. A female teacher further asserted that the school concentrated on boarders for that reason.

The only leading factor is the boarders, because if we concentrate on day scholars and neglect the boarders when most of the ones who pass the exams are the boarders and boarding schools have most of the children, then we will have many failures. Ms. Chiponde

The significance of putting students in the dormitories was also brought to the attention of the focus-group parents as a solution for better academic performance for unmotivated children. Headmaster Limba amplified the services that the school rendered to students in the dormitories. He also pointed out that day scholars were at a disadvantage because they could not avail themselves of these services.

The picture is different indeed; the performance of the day scholars is lower than boarding students on the average. This has been the trend ever since because the boarders are here, they do not do what the other children outside do such as watch DVDs. Even if we do not ask them to go for study, but because they have nothing to do, they pick up something to read or study . . . For the boarders, we actually force them to study, forcing as if they are in prison. We do this because we want to help them. If you look at the fence outside, you will see that it is quite high. There is a purpose for it. During class time, day scholars and boarders cannot go out; they have to stay inside to study. They should not have the time to go outside the fence. The one who does would be considered a problem. That is the purpose of the school. What I am trying to say is that a child in boarding school is fully under our supervision 100%. We force them to study; whether they like it or not, they have to study. They cannot sleep in class because during study period, there is a teacher. At night during study, there a teacher on duty who moves from class to class throughout for two hours. What happens the children get used to studying? The laziness goes away because they get used to the new system. They know that they have to study for 2 hours. Headmaster Limba

Unfortunately, this discussion did not provide a solution for those who could not afford it. I saw the look of despondency on many of the participants' faces as the headmaster "dangled the boarding facility carrot." In desperation, one mother requested for the same services that teachers provide to boarders.

I would like to ask you to help us the way you help boarders who are here to be interested in studying. I would like if you could show us how to make our day

scholars have the interest in studying. How do you motivate them to study? As you know, we cannot afford to put our children in boarding school so they could be benefited by the study skills. Therefore, we would like to know how to motivate those who have learning difficulties, those who have no interest in studying can study. The one in Form 3 is keen and he is doing well. I really would like you to help him so that he does well. His goal is to go to college and perhaps be an engineer. I want you to help him so that he reaches his goal. Even the one that is not interested should not be lazy. He should do well. Mrs. Tebulo

4. *Providing Study Periods and Remedial Classes to Increase Pass Rates.* Just like other schools and colleges that have introduced study halls to increase student academic performance (Dicken, Foreman, Jensen & Sherwood, 2008; Rosenbaum & Backer, 2011), Kampango instituted mandatory study hall periods and remedial classes. Boarders had the opportunity to study after dinner and early in the morning from 3:00 am to 5:00 am. The school provided 70 minutes after the MOE mandated school hours for study hall. In addition, the school provided remedial classes for students in examination classes. Unfortunately, day scholars could not avail themselves of these study sessions, resulting in poor performance. Measures however were instituted to assist the day scholars.

From 3:30 pm to 5:20 pm is study time. Now in studying, students can actually do their assignments or can do both a little reading or a little on assignments. During that time, the teacher on duty supervises. During that day, every teacher would have given assignments to the students. Now between 3:30 pm and 5:20 pm, the kids would not have enough time to finish all the assignments. Any assignments not done, the kids will do them at home and bring the following morning. With day students, there is a problem because some of them will come to school the following morning without finishing their assignments. Proprietor Dule

Now once they are at home, there is very little that we can do to influence the activities there. So, what we have done, our policies regarding the students is that they come to school by 7:30 in the morning. They do not leave the school not even for lunch, they only leave the school at 5:20 in the evening. They are here the full day. School is their occupation. Now during the day, they are in class up to 3:30 pm. And between 3:30 pm and 5:20 pm, they study and do assignments under supervision. . . . Day scholars mostly depend on the time that we teach here and the time we assign for study. That is all. This time is very insufficient and this affects the results. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

You may wish to know that this session we have compulsory study and remedial classes. Remedial classes for Form 2 and Form 4 and compulsory study for Form 1 and Form 3 for both boarders and day scholars. . . . We are giving them the compulsory study hour so they can improve their grades. We feel we are helping the parents. Headmaster, Mr. Semu

A plethora of studies on student achievement in developing countries including Malawi have concentrated on raising quality of education mainly through improving teacher quality, reduction of class size, and provision of adequate teaching and learning resources (Altinok, 2013; Chamdimba, 2002; Dizon-Ross, 2014; Kosgei, Mise, Odera, & Ayugi, 2013; Kruijer, 2010; Verspoor, 2008). Presently there are quite few studies that have included various aspects of Parental Involvement as factors that impact student academic achievement at the secondary-school level (Dizon-Ross, 2014; Huitt, Huitt, Monetti, & Hummel; 2009; Maphosa et al., 2013; Nyarko, 2007). Although recent studies in Africa are highlighting the importance of Parental Involvement, many schools still consider academic achievement as solely dependent on teachers (Kosgei et al., 2013). Parents defer to teachers for instruction because many parents have low-level education.

Section V: Communication Between School and Parents

Both educators and parents saw communication as a problem. Data from 43 participants revealed communication problems at the school. I grouped the emergent themes under five categories: “Communicating Academic Results,” “Communicating through Students,” “Contacting Parents for Behavioral Problems,” Communication Tension between School and Parents (see Figure 7) and “Parents Role in the Communication Process. I concluded this section with a reflection on “The Need for Open Communication Lines.”



Figure 7. Communication Issues at Kampango

Communicating Academic Results

The MoE requires schools to provide student academic performance reports to parents (Dizon-Ross, 2014). When schools are unable to deliver reports in Malawi, they often use students as messengers. An analysis of data collected in 2006 revealed that the school primarily communicated academic progress reports to parents at the end of each term by mail. Most of participants interviewed indicated that they did not receive the reports. However, teachers believed the students did not want their parents to see the reports therefore they made sure the reports disappeared. Kampango finally discontinued the system of sending reports through students. By 2011, the school expected parents to collect the school reports. The proprietor explained:

We have gone through three phases now of sending reports. At first, we used to send reports by post, but we heard from parents who said they never received the reports. What happened is that at the time we are sending the reports, every school in the country is also sending reports through the mail. The post office sometimes becomes careless. Some of the mail does not get to its intended destination. So, we have heard from parents saying, 'We haven't received the reports.' We then discontinued mailing the reports and started sending the report by the children themselves. The reports are ready. You give each student their report and you tell them to take the reports to their parents. We had a problem; not every student would take the reports to the parent, exactly. Especially if it is a bad student, he doesn't want to show that to the parents because the report would be a problem. So, we discontinued that. Now the system we are following is that

we keep the reports right here. When the parents come to visit, or pick up their children, we take that opportunity to give them the reports. Proprietor Dule

Although the data collected is silent about other reasons for this discontinuation, the headmaster's comment on the growth of the student body is a possible reason for the discontinuation. Although the school expected the parents to come for reports, few parents took the opportunity to visit the school for this purpose. Those who lived close to the school or those that had transportation had the advantage of meeting with form teachers when they collected the reports.

Communicating Through Students

The parents who lived further away from the school relied on their children to inform them about exam results. Therefore, many reports were uncollected. As the male proprietor indicated, children who had poor academic performance were not interested in taking the school reports home to self-disclose their poor performance and face the consequential repercussions for failing. Only the adolescents who had invested time in studying and had good academic performance would readily disclose their achievement to parents (Cheung, Pomerantz, & Dong, 2013).

Not only did the school send reports through the students, they also communicated important information to parents through the students. Teachers openly stated that the school communication to parents was verbal. Headmaster, Mr. Semu explained, "*Most of the time it is verbal. We write a letter, and give it to the girl. We would like to meet your parents. Do not come to school until you have brought a guardian.*"

Although the school trusted the students to deliver the messages and reports, the messages were subject to human forgetfulness or altered by the children's understanding

of the issues. Consequently, parents received little or faulty information from the school.

The issue of privacy is important to adolescents. They become overly protective of their personhood. Petronio and Durham's (2002) Communication Privacy Management theory proposes that people have a right to choose whether to disclose or share their personal information, especially if the information affects others and their reactions. In addition, she argues that one of the characteristics of early adolescents is the desire to control what they deem as their personal information and to protect their boundaries.

Contacting Parents for Behavioral Problems

Teachers, generally extended invitations to parents to address children's behavioral problems. These invitations however were infrequent as the school only communicated with parents when they could no longer find a viable solution to the misbehavior. In addition, parents complained that the schools disregarded them when dealing with grave issues such as expelling a student. While administrators discussed their protocol for dealing with misbehavior, the parents provided examples of this malpractice.

The parents come here and we chat with them. When we have problems with their ward, we call the parents so that we can discuss the issue. We talk about the problems and see what is wrong. We do sit down with them to see what the problems with their child are, and then we ask them to counsel the child.
Proprietor Mrs. Dule

Yes, we have interaction with them. Mainly when it comes to issues with discipline, most of the time we have interaction with the parents and we are looking at how many parents we interact with within a month. There are really just a few parents because we are only looking at cases in which the offender is habitually offending. Therefore, when you have exhausted all the internal corrective measures that is when you feel like involving the parents. . . . When disciplinary issues affect the performance, which is going down, we want to discuss that with parents. We want to find out what are the problems, why the girl is not performing well in school. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

That arrangement for inviting parents is there, but it only happens when a student is misbehaving or is in trouble. That is when they invite parents to come to school to discuss the child's problem. If there are no problems, the school does not call parents to come to the school. Mrs. Kapinga

"Sometimes we just hear from the school that we expelled children." Mr. Makani

Literature shows that schools are deficient in contacting parents for students' academic performance compared to the more frequent parent-initiated contacts with schools to discuss students' academics (Catsambis & Garland, 1997).

Communication Tensions Between Educators and Parents

Educators revealed that the school initiated contact when they observed that a student's academic performance was poor.

It is when the academic performance of the girls, maybe other problems, peer pressure and those, they change and become lazy or indifferent to what we want them to be. When those things are noticed, we also call the immediate parent or guardian to come to the school and tell them how their ward is conducting herself at the school. Headmaster, Mr. Semu

When we see that the student is not doing well in class who also happens to be a day scholar, we summon the parents or guardians to come so that we can look at the problems that we are facing at the school and the performance of the student. But as I have already said, 'How many parents would be interested to come?' Most of them would not turn up and that indeed is discouraging on our part. But efforts have been made to invite the parents to come, and in turn, most don't come. Vice Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

These comments from administrators seem to have fallen short in light of the parents' complaints. While three interviewees and one parent in the focus-group session corroborated the administrators' assertions that the school invites parents to discuss students' academic performance, 15 participants stated that they had never been invited to the school. Mrs. Mbale commented, *"What we see from the school are class reports. These are sent to us but I have never been invited to the school to discuss anything that concerns the school or my child."* This group of parents who refuted the administrator's

comments included three individuals who worked at the school in 2011. They indicated that they were neither provided with reports nor invited by teachers to discuss their children's performance. The following complaints were made in the presence of two administrators who did not refute the assertions.

Sometimes the students have a very poor academic performance report. The school should be able to tell parents about the poor report and that the school counseled the student. They should be able to talk to the parents to discuss the report and show them the subjects where he is doing poorly. This would help the parents understand the progress of the child so they do not waste money for the child if he is not doing well at school. Sometimes the parents pay school fees and yet the child is no longer in school. He left for Lilongwe. Since there are no reports, you will find that the term ends and the child fails his exams. Mr. Tumani

My son was doing well in some subjects; yet he was doing poorly in others. However, I did not have an appropriate solution because there was no communication from the teachers so we could discuss the problem. Now I want to find out whether the problem is the child not understanding the subject, or the problem is in the teaching of the subject. Mr. Pole

Kampango data shows two significant factors that determined the type of communication the school had with parents. First, the size of the student body and the number of parents the school had to interact with was prohibitive. Headmaster Limba pointed out this difficulty when he stated, *"It is difficult to arrange for many parents. We have so many children here, 400 to 500 who are day scholars now, to involve the parents of 500 day scholars is difficult."* Second, administrators' and teachers' perception of the unwillingness of parents to get involved set the school on a trajectory of disregarding interaction with parents. Why spend precious time inviting parents who are not concerned about their wards? Other serious communication deficiencies were revealed when the school took liberties in expelling children without their parents' knowledge. The focus-group members discussed their dissatisfaction with this type of practice, which is indicative of communication breakdown.

“The issue of expelling a student without parents knowing may come from the fact that the parents were not called. It is important that these issues are discussed beforehand so parents understand what it is going on.” Mr. Pole

In addition, the data revealed the absence of communication policies and lack of viable strategies for communicating with parents. Consequently, these factors led to inadequate networking between parents and educators. These deficiencies were manifested by parents’ ignorance of the school’s academic functions such as school policies, rules, regulations, type of curriculum offered at the school, teaching and learning strategies, supervision of teachers, assignments and grading systems, and school resources (textbooks, labs, and computers) as the following statements indicate.

If he asked me to help him with English and biology I would try. But whenever I ask him about his assignments, he does not show me. It is possible the teachers do assignments in class so he has little homework. When he was in a government school, he had had quite a few assignments which he did at home for the following class periods. But it seems now he has very little. How do the teachers explain the issue of assignments? Mr. Sadziwika

We know that the teachers teach and we have been encouraged that for the children to learn we should encourage them at home. Is there a possibility for the school to buy textbooks that our children can take to use at home? Is it because of money? Mr. Tumani

I understand what you are saying but why it that the school has no computer room? Mr. Jusab

Much of what the parents inquired from the school in the focus group meeting could have been clarified in a newsletter. The school underrated the importance of these issues to parents. Senge et al. (2000) urges that management of an organization is responsible for providing information to its patrons to ensure they can make informed choices. He asserts, “Management is abdicating its responsibility if it fails to clarify a single overarching objective that can inform sound trade-offs” (Senge et al., 2000, p. 59).

Kampango educator's relationship with parents, sidelining them, is symptomatic of what Bourdieu (1977) asserted in his social reproduction concept that schools perpetuate social inequalities.

Parents' Role in the Communication Process

Parents' ideology of obligations and expectations derived from a cultural perspective may have complicated communication between parents and educators. Parents held the view that communication was a teachers' prerogative. Parents had sent children to the school and paid tuition, the school was to ensure that the parents had information about their children's performance.

Teachers have the responsibility to indicate to parents that the child is not doing well in school. It's the same if a child is misbehaving and beating others at school. The teachers at the school where the child is misbehaving, the headmaster, or the teacher call the parents to tell them that the child is misbehaving and beating other students. I believe it is the same. The teachers can send messages to say, 'your child is not doing well at school, we need you to come so we can discuss this.' Mr. Fodya

This belief mirrors Coleman's (1998) social capital forms of obligation, expectations and trustworthiness of structure discussed earlier.

The blame for the lack of information cannot fall solely on the school. I was surprised that parents who had children at the school for three years knew very little about the school. Even parents who lived close to the school did not take time to visit the school. They depended on the information from students. One parent stated, "*Sometimes we hear that the teacher that was teaching them left and another one has taken over and the children have problems as there is no continuity,*" Mr. Donda. If parents were really interested in the education of their children, why did they enroll their wards without acquainting themselves with the services and education provided by the school? Parents

could have had the information had they made efforts to familiarize themselves with the school operations. The face-to-face interaction would have potentially given them opportunity for questioning and clarifying issues (Barry & Grant, 2000) about the children, and for building relationships with the teachers.

Many parents in this school had no informational capital because they lacked the cultural capital and social capital to initiate contact with the school. Their attitude was indicative of deficient communication practices that negated the inherent intergenerational closure necessary for assisting children to have better educational outcomes. However, the educated parents' cultural capital and habitus worked to their advantage in developing a relationship with the school, a practice that gave parents the self-efficacy to work with their children at home.

Lareau (1987) argues that parents who have little or no cultural capital (less education and low-social status) find it difficult to interact with teachers. Her research compared parents' involvement at two schools. She found that parents of the Colton school who were mostly high school graduates had limited information about the school because their information came from their children. On the contrary, Prescott School parents, who were middle class and better informed, interacted with teachers and assisted their children with assignments.

The Need for Open Communication Lines

The focus-group session of 2006 took on a different function that day. Families used the session to seek information about the school and plagued the headmaster and the vice headmaster with questions about issues they did not understand concerning the school. The educators were also able to provide ideas and strategies for parents to use in

assisting their children at home.

For example, the child should be asked what he learned at school. Parents should still ask even if they don't know what he is studying. You should ask him to explain what he learned that day. Then he should discuss math and the parent should ask what he learned in math. Whether the child does not explain properly, he should still explain something about math. It is good that many parents know what math is. This helps the child to be alert in school so that he learns because he knows that he will be asked at home. In this way, the child will learn.

Headmaster Limba

There was camaraderie between the administrators and parents as they candidly discussed the school's program, the issues about tuition and fees, and parents' own problems in supporting their children. They seemed to want to understand how to accomplish the goals of improving the children's academic performance. The participants arrived at a consensus for the importance of Parental Involvement at the school. At the end of the session, I had the sense that the administrators would want to advocate for better relationships with parents.

Literature on Parental Involvement stresses the importance of positive two-way communication between school and parents (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Murray et al., 2014; Patrikakou, 2008). Including parents in school decisions concerning children's behavioral issues helps curb suspicions and negative perspectives that parents may have about the school. When the school makes efforts to communicate and includes parents in their decision-making, parents are empowered to make informed choices about advocating for and disciplining their children.

In addition, communication is crucial for establishing trust, promoting better relationships and creating social capital that benefits children (Coleman, 1988; Dufur et al., 2013; Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999).

“Communication is the key element that shapes parent involvement activities at home

and at school and enhances collaboration” (Patrikakou, 2008, p. 2).

Communicative action is the interaction between people who strive to reach an understanding of a subject and/or the world they live in through negotiations, interpretations, and cooperation (Habermas, 1996). This concept is similar to social capital in which the dyads are interested in establishing a relationship and seek to arrive at mutual understanding (Bolton, 2005). Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2007) define communicative action as interaction where the members “consciously and deliberately aim, 1) To reach intersubjective agreement as a basis for, 2) mutual understanding so as to, 3) Reach an unforced consensus about what to do in the particular practical situation in which they find themselves” (p. 293). I truly believed that for the first time, parents were able to engage in communicative action, which I hoped would build a trusting relationship between them.

Although there was cordial communication between the educators and parents during the focus group session and it seemed that the educators would develop better communication lines and pursue a better relationship with parents, five years later, the enthusiasm that had been shown by the administrators had waned. Because of the rapid growth of the school student body the development of a serious relationship between the school and parents was stymied.

To sum, the decision made by the school to minimize communication to parents, except for behavioral issues, reduced parents’ effectiveness at home. How might parents perceive teachers’ lack of communication other than by believing the school did not value their contribution and was not interested in their involvement? Without communication, there was no relationship. The proprietors’ strategic action to pursue

their own goals (Habermas, 1996) to “kick-aside” parents, their major decisions to stop sending reports and to only invite parents to the school for behavioral problems cut the informational channel for many of the parents and gave parents the message that they were not important to their children’s education. Barry and Crant (2000) propose that “messages convey not only referential meaning, but also relational meaning through which individuals interpret their relationships” (p. 651). Had the school improved their communication strategies, parents would have had better understanding of the school’s vision and how to assist their children.

Chapter 3 Summary

Several themes emerged from the analysis of Kampango data that define the type of Parental Involvement at Kampango. Although a variety of ways were used to encourage academic success, parents considered their financial investment as the most meaningful involvement. Without parents’ assistance, children could not obtain an education. Academic socialization (conversation with their children about school) was the most significant home-based Parental Involvement even though parents’ visibility at school was minimal.

The data also revealed barriers to Parental involvement at Kampango. School-based barriers include the proprietors’ decision to isolate parents in order to concentrate on students’ performance instead of building a relationship with parents; teachers’ deficit thinking attitude toward parents, and deficient school-home communication which was mainly limited to disciplinary issues. The home-based barriers comprised of parent’s own cultural values and beliefs concerning the function of education which determined the support they provided to their children, orphans and social orphans, and parents’ social

contexts such as their education, employment, time and energy which affected the level of Parental Involvement at home. The most salient findings at Kampango were the level of control the proprietor had on Parental Involvement, and the participant disparate understanding of Parental Involvement which resulted in conflicting perspectives about their roles.

On one hand, the proprietors' decision to isolate the parents from the institution and the school's inability to espouse clearly its values and policies to the parents contributed to parents' misunderstanding of the school's functions and their own roles. In addition, teachers seemed to be operating from a colonial mindset about the functions of a school and the roles of teachers and parents. Consequently, they held a deficit thinking ideology against parents, believing that parents had neither the skills nor the appropriate home environment for their children's educational support.

While it was evident from the teachers' perspectives that Parental Involvement was necessary, the school administrators were unwilling to pursue alternate paths to engage parents because of the hands-off attitude of the proprietors. They could not address issues of Parental Involvement without the proprietors' buy-in to the concept. As the male proprietor acknowledged, it was a deliberate action to limit potential collaboration between the parents and the school to ensure that teachers would have more time to drill the students. Their emphasis on academics without parents' involvement negated parents' participation and invited parents' dissatisfaction and discontentment with the school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, Streeter, & Mason, 2008) and resulted in the school's inability to benefit from parents' knowledge about their children. This failure of intergenerational closure (Coleman, 1988) resulted in the marginalization of parents and

the lack of social capital necessary for effecting parents' involvement both at school, and at home.

On the other hand, parents own social context were a deterrent to Parental Involvement. Parents who lacked self-efficacy for interacting with school personnel because the school approaches and practices were foreign to them (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 2000), and those who lacked knowledge for helping their children, denied their children the cultural capital that could help them succeed at school. However, parents who were unable to assist their children trusted the school to deliver on its promises of matriculating students to the university. This trust coupled with parents' own sacrificial investments were the reasons parents believed educators would meet their obligation to 'work academic achievement miracles' for the children parents 'dumped' at the school. This reciprocal type of relationship befits Coleman's (1988) social capital forms of obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of a structure. Unfortunately, the biggest problem was that these obligations lacked clarity, hence the contracts were both implicit and informal.

Although this study heightened the Kampango educator's awareness of the advantages of Parental Involvement, a partnership between parents and the school was impossible. Educators' unfamiliarity with literature that has charted the benefits of Parental Involvement was a disadvantage to both the proprietor and teachers. Understanding these benefits would have propelled them to develop strategies for collaborating with parents in order to accomplish the goal of matriculating more students to university. Isolating parents from children's education was providing incomplete education because the students were not given the opportunity to observe adults

cooperating on shared goals. Education should be holistic providing the skill sets needed for immediate and long-term use (ultimately resulting in the development of society). In writing about the Habermasian (1996) theory, Lovat (2013) stated, “Effective education should not focus solely on ‘the basics’ of technical learning (the techne) if it is seriously looking to the good of its clients and society at large” (p. 80). The involvement of parents at Kampango would have been a basis for building a variable relationship that would have facilitated better student academic performance.

CHAPTER 4

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT BALALA SECONDARY SCHOOL

Analysis

Parental Involvement in children's education is significant for improving children's educational outcomes. I explored the quintain of Parental Involvement in private schools in Malawi, and I chose Balala Secondary School as the second school. The aim was to discover the extent of Parental Involvement in private secondary school environments. This chapter describes Parental Involvement as defined by Balala administrators, teachers and parents. Using a grounded theory approach to explore Parental Involvement at Balala Secondary School, participants responded to the following research questions:

1. In what ways are parents involved with their children at the school and at home?
2. What are the enablers and barriers to Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools?
3. What are the attitudes of educators towards Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools?
4. How does the relationship between the school personnel and the parents

define the parents' role in Malawian private secondary schools?

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes the Balala context, followed by the data analysis section. The last section provides a summary to the chapter.

The Balala Educational Institution Context

Balala is a private secondary school owned and operated by Mrs. Dambo who is an educator. Located about three miles from the city center in Lilongwe, Balala is surrounded by suburban of middle class city dwellers. Although in the middle of the city, Balala owns sizable land for further school developments. A former secondary school teacher established the school in 1993. During the time of my data collection, the school had over 1,000 students in its three institutions: the nursery school, primary school and secondary school. The educational infrastructure included a secondary school girls' dormitory. In addition, the school had a board of directors and a PTA.

Secondary School Student Enrollment

Enrollment stood at 378 comprised of 198 girls and 180 boys. Most students at the school were day scholars while 106 girls lived in the school's dormitory. By 2011, the student body had increased to 420 comprised of 204 boys and 216 girls. In addition, the school had also opened boys boarding facilities, which housed 68 boys. The number of girls in the girls' dormitory increased by three girls. The student body at the school was comprised primarily of students from middle class homes with a few students from upper class homes.

Staffing and Administrative Roles

Balala secondary section was run by Headmaster Chilamba and his deputy Mr. Mango. The school had 18 teachers who were subject specialists and held four-year college degrees. Like many other schools in Malawi, some teachers were designated as form masters to provide advice to students and to oversee their overall academic performance.

Curriculum at Balala

Balala offered the general subjects required the MoE, which comprised of English, History, Mathematics, Geography, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Art, Agriculture, Social Studies, and Religion. The school provided opportunity for students to either take the MSCE or the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) set in England. Unlike the government school and other private secondary schools, Balala classes started at 7:15 am. and ended at 4:00 pm.

Data Collection at Balala

Several data collection methods were used in order to capture participants' perspectives about Parental Involvement at Balala. The methods included observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group sessions, an open-ended questionnaire, and documents (see Table 10). Unfortunately, respondents to the questionnaire did not provide reasons for their brief responses.

Observation at Balala Private Secondary School

The observation took place on Friday, November 24, 2006. I took advantage of planned school events at Bambino, specifically the parent-teacher conferences which

Table 10

Methods and Participants in Case 2

Case 2	Participants	Planned Methods & Participants	Actual Methods & Participants
Balala	Parents	Interview (n=15) taped, Field notes	Interview (n=13)
		Focus group (n=7) taped, Field notes	Focus group (n=5)
		Open-ended questionnaire (n=15)	Open-ended questionnaire (n=18)
	Teachers	Focus group (n=9) taped, Field notes	Focus group (n=5)
		Interview (n=12) taped, Field notes	Interview (n=6)
		Open-ended questionnaire (n=9)	Open-ended questionnaire (n=9)
	Administrators	Interview (n=2) taped, Field notes	Interview (n=2)
	Proprietor	Interview (n=1) taped, Field notes Documents	Interview (n=1) Documents collected
PTA chairman	Interview taped, Field notes	Interview (n=1)	
Parent-teacher conference	Observation, Field notes	Observation (parents n=18) (teachers n=9)	

were called ‘Parents’ Day’ to observe the attitudes of parents and teachers and to monitor the interaction between teachers and parents.

The parent-teacher meetings at Bambino took place in a classroom. Seven desks and benches were set up in a square where subject teachers met with parents. I was given a chair to sit in one corner of the room by the door and from my vantage point I observed the parent-teacher exchanges and took notes. Because of the open-setting, the teachers and parents spoke in subdued tones as they discussed the students’ progress reports. After the discussion, the parents signed the documents and left. My assessment of the situation was that the 18 parents who came that morning to discuss their children’s’ academic performance were familiar with the process.

Interview Sessions and Administration of the Questionnaire

Apart from the interviews done in participants’ homes and offices, I interviewed parents who had come for the parent-teacher conferences at the school in 2006. The

headmaster provided space for me to conduct the interviews and to administer the questionnaire. In 2011, I conducted in-depth interviews with the aim of verifying emergent codes from the analysis of the 2006 data. During the second phase, I solicited the assistance of the administrative secretary to administer a follow-up questionnaire.

Organization of the Chapter

Findings from the study are organized under four major sections according to emergent themes from the Balala data analysis (see Figure 8): Section I, Who Is Responsible for Children's Education; Section II, Opening the Door to Parental Involvement (The role of the school in encouraging the involvement of parents in children's education); Section III, The Educators' Perceptions of Parental Involvement; and Section IV, Families' Perception of Their Involvement in Their Children's Education. The discussion that ensues highlights these findings and provides thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that describe details of each finding. Instead of elucidating findings from each data collection method, the discussion concentrates on overall findings as analyzed using the NVivo qualitative data analysis program. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Section I: Responsibilities and Roles

Who Is Responsible for Children's Education?

Three themes emerged from data regarding the locus of control of children's academic achievement. Findings showed that responses could be divided into those who believed in a collaboration between parents and educators, those who stressed differentiated roles, and parents who believed they are responsible because of their financial investment (see Figure 9).

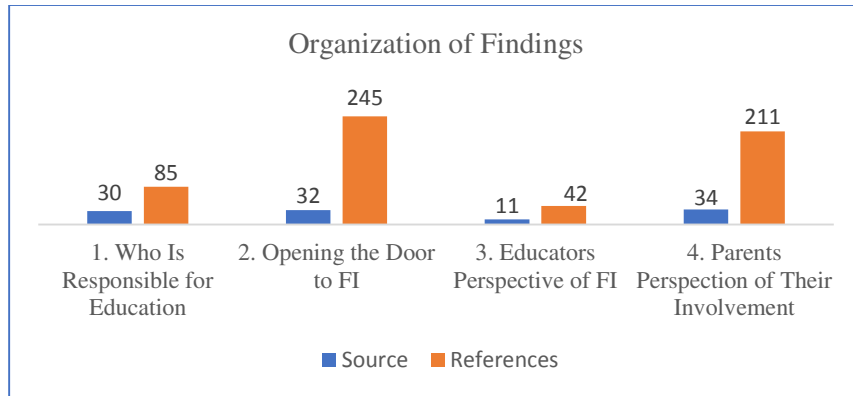


Figure 8. Organization of findings at Balala.

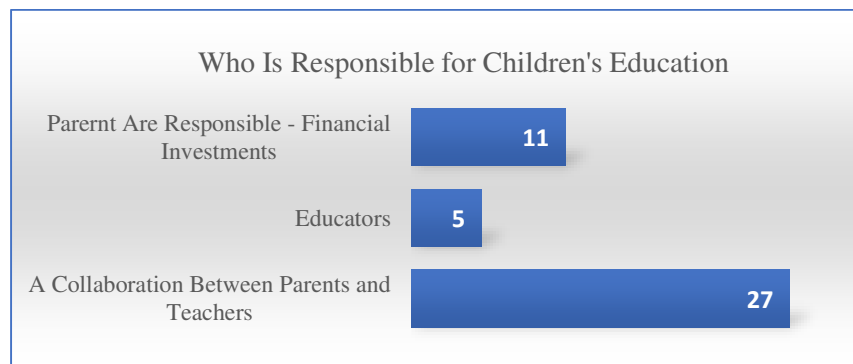


Figure 9. Who is responsible for children's education?

Collaboration Between Families and Teachers

Almost all participants believed that the academic success of children is the responsibility of both parents and teachers. Both parties have structures and resources that contribute to the child's education. The following quotes represent data from a cross section of participants who believed in the collaboration.

The parents should really realize that they have to be involved in their children's education. Parents need to monitor the progress of their children. The children need to feel that they are really appreciated in the little effort they make and how they are performing at school. They need be recognized by parents in order to make progress. Proprietor Dambo

For a child to excel in his or her education, it is a combined effort of the teacher and the parent. So, the parent has to come in just to help so that whatever the teacher is doing should really be to the objective of making sure the child learns.
Vice Headmaster Mango

Parents should work together with the teachers. If parents become divorced from the happenings of the school, even if the teachers work with the children, you cannot raise the level of the grades much. At the same time, learning is about looking at environments. Not only one environment that assists in learning. So, at home there must be an environment for that. At school, there must also be an environment for that. So, if these environments are put together, by the end of the day something is going to be achieved which is going to be called learning. At home, the child has to be well disciplined; at school, also he has to be well disciplined. And at home, he must be given time to study, at school also time to learn. Teacher Jiyani

We think there should be equal effort from the teacher and the parents they should cooperate to teach the child and maybe the parents should put more effort than the teacher in teaching the child. In addition, the child has more time with parents than the teachers. If the parents do not help the child, the child will not learn. Parents have their part to play, I meant a role to play, and the teachers also have their role. Both parts need to work together so that there may be some progress. The goals that parents and their children have set should be achieved. That's what I can say on the subject. Teacher Kadule

Responsibility lies in the hands of both teachers as well as parents because as the saying goes: "it takes the whole village to raise a child." That is to say, the future of the child generally falls in the hands of both parties. The child spends much of his time both with parents and at the school which means that the parents have to make sure that what the child learns at school is being effective through monitoring and encouragement to study and for him to do his assignments. Again, for a child to have a good future, he needs to be properly raised by the parents. This will have an impact at school in the sense of discipline and more especially performance. If we talk about bad company, the child is exposed to such companies at school as well as at home, therefore the responsibility is generally in the hands of both parties. Mr. Suntha

"Both parents and teachers should make sure the child benefits and achieves his or her schooling goals." Ms. Kondwani

"Parents and teachers have to work hand in hand to encourage the child." Mr. Lapani

The findings support literature that promote a collaboration between parents and

educators to increase student's academic outcomes (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Moon & Ivins, 2004). Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory provides a rationale for participants' views on why the partnership between teachers and parents is important. The children's microsystems (the home and the school) interface at the mesosystem level to provide an environment that nurtures the children's development. Both parties are involved in nurturing the student and their contributions result in better educational outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Chowa et al., 2013; Deslandes & Royer, 1997; Epstein, 2001; Jeynes, 2007).

Differentiated Roles

The data analysis revealed differences in participant's understanding of teachers' and parents' responsibility toward children's education. Three educators defined it as a shared responsibility with differentiated roles and assigned Parental Involvement as home-based. Vice Headmaster Mango underscored the different roles, thus, "*Ninety percent of students' learning is spent with the teacher; therefore, the teacher has greater responsibility of contributing towards the students' academic performance, and the parents' participation is in terms of disciplinary issues.*" In addition, Teacher Kalowa provided reasons why some parents believed teachers are responsible for academic performance:

As a teacher, we are trained what we are supposed to do in class. We are supposed to know the curriculum, the syllabus, the content and the different methodologies. Your methodology should accommodate all students, the fast learners and the slow learners.

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) parents' involvement can be either active or passive. Active parental role construction is the, "belief that primary

responsibility for the child's educational outcomes belong to the parent" (p. 44) who should actively support the child both at home and at school. Parents can be ultimately responsible or collaborate with the school. On the contrary, passive parental role construction is defined as: "the belief that the school holds primary responsibility for the child's educational outcomes" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 44), therefore parents follow school's mandates and only participate when invited.

In Balala's case, it seems that parents believed in active role construction. They provided academic support at home, sought to collaborate with the school and initiated contact with teachers. In addition, while educational systems promote collaboration between parents and educators, there are educators who believe parents do not have the knowledge and skills for providing academic assistance. They assign parents the responsibility of providing resources and instilling values to ensure that the children are better behaved at school (Swap, 1993).

Financial Investment Defines Parental Involvement

The data analysis showed a subtle but salient parental understanding that financial investments played a greater role in the education of children. The headmaster, Mr. Bwemba discussed the attitude of some parents who assumed that their responsibility was only to ensure the child was in school and had educational resources. He concluded, "*These parents believed that after paying the fees, providing the uniforms and the books, they are done.*" Although none of the parents blatantly discussed education in terms of their financial investments, their "*I am responsible*" responses had financial implications. In response to the question, "What problems do you face in getting involved in your

child's education?" they referred to school fees as the main obstacle to their involvement. The following responses attest to this analysis.

"Late fees payments due to lack of money contributes to my child's absence at school." Mrs. Bwalo

The big thing is the financial crisis; as we all know that money is the major weapon that makes it difficult to keep a child in school. It is difficult when a child has been chased out of school when you cannot source money for her school fees.
Mr. Suntha

Literature shows that parents in Africa are involved in their children's education through their direct financial investments since secondary education is not free (Hall & Mambo, 2015). Poverty becomes a barrier to obtaining an education. Hence, parents believed paying school fees is their main responsibility to ensure that their children have an education. Parents value education as a channel for upward social and economic mobility (Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999), and those who can afford it send their children to good private schools where they have the probability of getting to college. With this understanding, parents boldly asserted that they are responsible for their children's education. Thus, the parents' intentionality in investing their finances in children's education and spending time interacting with their children at home ensures the transference of cultural capital for academic success (Coleman, 1988).

Section II: Opening the Door to Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement Strategies was a major axial code emerging from Balala data. A brief background highlights Balala's purpose to build a relationship with parents. The proprietor's vision was to provide excellent education, to give equal opportunity to both boys and girls to obtain an education, and to promote the participation of parents in children's education. These goals were derived from Baha'i principles, a religion she

belonged to, as espoused by one of the founders, Baha'u'llah (Smith, 2008). Of importance to the proprietor's school program were the following principles: Oneness of all humans; scientific investigation of truth; equality of men and women; removal of all types of prejudice; and universal compulsory education. The proprietor asserted, "The most meritorious deed anyone can do is to educate a child because we stand in the place of God to educate them." Her involvement of parents was attesting to the fact that children's academic achievement could only be realized if the community and parents were involved in children's education. Therefore, she used several platforms for interfacing with parents (see Figure 10). These include: Formation of a PTA and Development of a Two-Way Communication System.

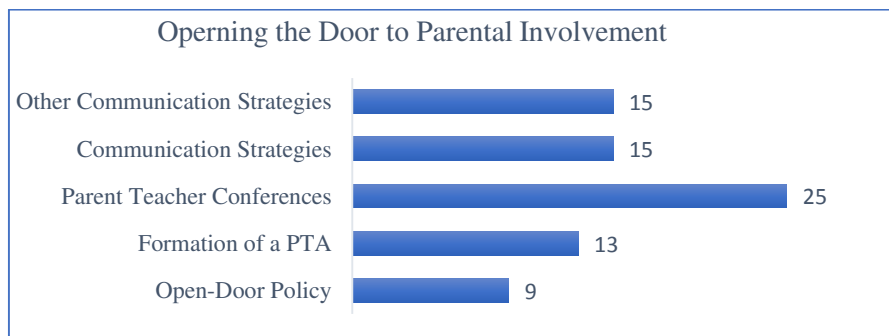


Figure 10. Opening the Door to Parental Involvement

The Formation of a PTA

The establishment of a PTA transpired as a result of the proposed mandates by the newly formed Private Schools Association of Malawi (PRISAM) whose function was to monitor education quality. Mrs. Kokani, a previous PTA member indicated that this association was mandated to ensure that *“private school curricula follow the national*

syllabus and that schools should provide quality education similar to the government schools even though some of these private secondary schools used British or American syllabi.” Mrs. Kokani also further informed me that Mrs. Dambo was the first vice president of the Association of Private Schools and readily implemented some of the association’s mandates in her own school. The PTA was established four years after the inception of the secondary school. Although the institution had nursery, primary and secondary sectors on the campus, the administrators chose to have one PTA. However, each sector had its own section meetings.

Even though the vision of a PTA came from the proprietor and her administrators, strategies were put in place to ensure parents buy-in of the initiative. These steps included: a) the positioning of parent leaders and managers such as Mr. Balaka and Mrs. Kokani, and, b) the formation of a committee of parents and teachers responsible for investigating how PTAs function and for developing the PTA policies and regulations. The headmaster Mr. Chilamba asserted:

So, we as Balala, we had to look at how the international private schools run their PTAs. We then involved the same parents to go out to Bishop McKenzie International Private School and asked the people there how they were running their project.

Role of the PTA

In the Malawian environment where parents’ secondary school-based academic participation is mostly non-existent, the PTA was a unique venture which contributed to parents’ role construction. The establishment of the PTA empowered parents to make decisions and engage in efficacious behavior that benefitted the school and their children. Two important actions resulted: *Parents’ participation in the development of*

infrastructure, and Parents' involvement in school decisions.

1. *Families' participation in the development of infrastructure.* In addition to tuition and fees, parents were paying MK19, 600 per term and of that, MK100 went to the PTA budget. This enabled parents to rehabilitate the physical infrastructure of the school. The PTA chair Mr. Balaka proudly touted the parents' efforts at the school and stated that parents installed a "*Zebra crossing, a structure for children to use during break time, and an electric razor fence for the girls' dormitory.*"

2. *Parents' involvement in school decisions.* The PTA became a vehicle parents used to advocate for better educational requisites for their children and to assist in disciplinary issues. Networking within the parent group provided the social capital needed for negotiations. As a result, the school accepted parents' requests which included; deletions or additions of subjects in the curriculum, school schedule alterations, uniform requirement modification and tuition payment calendar adjustments. The following are some of the discussion pertaining to role of the PTA.

We don't teach Chichewa because the parents decided through the PTA that they did not want the school to teach Chichewa. However, because of parents' insistence, we have introduced Agriculture because if a student wants to go to a government secondary school he should fit there as well. Headmaster Chilamba

Parents had requested the school to open the school during school breaks for examination class students. Parents felt the 7 to 8 weeks' school break is too long to keep children at home while they are preparing for the national or international examinations. So instead of arranging for teachers individually, parents asked the school if they could bring their children to school for revision.
Vice Headmaster Mango

"A general consensus in a PTA meeting about uniforms mandated that students who had the old uniforms which were in good condition could continue wearing them during that term." Proprietor Dambo

In addition, the PTA members were the liaison between parents and the

administrators. They participated in disciplinary decision-making and handled administrative matters such as school regulations and fees. A member of the PTA was on the disciplinary committee. As the headmaster indicated, *“Whatever is happening in the school in terms of extreme disciplinary cases, we call on them and they represent parents so that they are aware of what is happening.”* The PTA chairman, Mr. Balaka praised the school for valuing parents and concluded, *“the school, listens to us and parents are ‘not sidelined.’”*

3. *School Uses PTA to Encourage Parents.* Apart from the above strategies for involving parents, in 2006, participants spoke of substantive communication between parents and teachers occurring during the PTA meetings. Parents discussed problems they were facing with their children, and the school took advantage of these meetings to communicate to parents’ strategies for assisting their children at home. Both literate and illiterate parents benefitted from the meetings. The following comments highlight the functionality of PTA meetings.

“During the PTA section meetings, the heads of departments and different teachers are given roles to speak. They discuss the school’s expectations about student behavior, punctuality and how to help children study.” PTA Chairman, Mr. Balaka

Some parents who are illiterate, we have encouraged them to make sure to tell the children to study, like from 7 o’clock to 9. We tell them ‘You don’t have to tell them that you don’t know how to read. You may not know the stuff they are reading. The mere fact that you have told them, you have encouraged the child to study.’ We have seen that it works. . . . When we have a PTA, they are times when we are given a chance to talk. That’s when we come up with such things.
Headmaster Chilamba

PTA Challenges

Although research participants in 2006 praised the administrators for permitting

the formation of a PTA, educators were quick to point out the challenges they detected. These problems included intermittent members' attendance due to busy schedules and lack of members' commitment to the PTA. The proprietor and headmaster credited the irregular attendance to parents' ulterior motives. The proprietor disclosed, "*Some of the members may not be present or active in fundraising, but when we discuss school fees they are there to discuss lowering school fees.*" In addition, teachers and administrators indicated that the PTA was dysfunctional because of the sporadic parents' participation. While agreeing with the educators' perspectives, the PTA chairman had a more positive perspective.

There is a cross section of willing parents who participate in school projects. As for the secondary school section, parents participate because they are informed by their children about problems. Parents come to discuss these issues. Yes, we are effective in the sense that whenever we request or whenever we have seen that the school needs something to correct the situation for the welfare of the kids, we cooperate. PTA Chairman, Mr. Balaka

The projects that had been undertaken by the parents and their financial contributions projected a vibrant PTA at the school. It is possible that the educators' expectations were higher than the observed outcomes.

Despite having a functional PTA earlier, by 2011 teachers' and parents' commitment had diminished. Teachers who joined the school after my interview in 2006 were quite aware of the PTA's past achievements but they had not witnessed any PTA functions themselves. Teacher Mwaka, confirmed,

I know that there was a strong PTA. The secondary school parents rehabilitated the road but nothing has happened these last few years. I think since I came in 2007, there has been one PTA meeting. Since then we have changed the system twice. I haven't seen any members.

The Headmaster, Mr. Bwemba confirmed the educators' perspective, thus he stated, "*The PTA is supposed to meet every term, but this whole year we never had a PTA*

meeting.” However, one teacher spoke highly of the PTA and its functions and told me that two PTA meetings had been held that year and referred me to talk to the new PTA chairman Mr. Make. Unfortunately, I was unable to reach Mr. Make to verify Mr. Thando’s claims. I wondered whether Mr. Thando (a new teacher at the school) was talking about meetings he had heard about from others. Although in qualitative research it is important to pay attention to discrepant voices, I decided not to take him to task over his assertions because five other teachers and the headmaster had provided opposing views.

My discussion with educators revealed lack of enthusiasm for the PTA. Teacher Kalowa provided a reason for the malfunction. *“The PTA is not promoted. It is almost close to two years that I have been here. I have never heard of or attended a PTA meeting.”* While there was a trusting relationship between the 2006 headmaster and PTA chairman, the 2011 Headmaster, Mr. Bwemba neither provided information about nor referred to the subsequent PTA chairman, Mr. Make. It seemed the previous relationship between the PTA chair and the headmaster did not transfer to the new incumbent in 2011. This was evident from when he indicated that he had never met the PTA chair.

The above discussion however, portrays two contradicting perceptions of the function of the PTA at this school. While acknowledging the PTAs supportive role in administrative issues in earlier years, both parents and teachers saw a lack of determination to ensure that the PTA continued its functions in the secondary school section. Notwithstanding the efforts put in by the proprietor and earlier administrators, the decrease in the PTA’s functions could be attributed to changing priorities that took precedence. It is also possible that the PTA floundered because of the absence of proper

orientation and guidance for the new administrators. Management changes in organizations and schools affect the implementation of policies and programs especially when proper orientation is lacking. Often employees of the organization take their lead from management and if proper guidance is absent, the organization suffers. Senge et al. (2000) declares,

If you want to improve a school system, before you change the rules, you must look first to the ways that people think and interact together. Otherwise, the new policies and organizational structures will simply fade away and the organization will revert, over time, to the way it was before. (p. 19)

Studies indicate that principals have a responsibility for sustaining school improvements. They are accountable for establishing the school climate and creating a welcoming environment which include overseeing the application of policies and implementing an effective communication system (Hall & George, 1999; LaBahan, 1995; MacNeil & Patin, 2005a, 2005b; Senge et al, 2000; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2006). The lack of the principal's oversight of the PTA transferred to the teachers because private school teachers act on the mandates they are given. They construct their understanding from administrators' actions (Hall & George, 1999). However, in Balala's case, it is possible that the emphasis had merely shifted to parent-teacher conferences which had better attendance and the proprietor may have thought otherwise of PTAs.

I am aware that PTAs are rife with conflicts and tensions because of unclear and ambiguous roles and responsibilities (Ugwulashi & Archibong, 2012). In some cases, the PTA's existence is at the mercy of the institution or proprietors. Specifically, in private schools with business privatization mandates, PTAs have limited function. Therefore, the laissez faire attitude of administrators could have derailed the partnership. Unfortunately, I was not able to get the proprietor's and PTA chairman's view in 2011 for they could

have shared more light into this issue.

The Balala's PTA is an example of most PTAs, a formal structure—a governing body with mandates to oversee the improvement of a school's educational quality. PTAs provide transparency, accountability, and are conduits through which parents' voices can be heard (Onderi & Makori, 2012; Ugwulashi & Archibong, 2012). PTAs are critical in providing structures for partnerships between the school and parents for the purpose of improving children's educational outcomes. Ugwulashi and Archibong (2012) assert,

The concept of internal grouping arrangement tends to facilitate good school-community relationship. In this perspective, obeying the principles of good school-community relationship, parents are opportune to understand what exists in the school their wards attend and the constraints school experienced in the course of carrying out the administrative and instructional functions. (p. 106)

At Balala, the PTA was a vehicle used for promoting a relationship between parents and educators. The networking between educators and parents augmented both bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2001)—bonding between parents and bridging between parents and teachers. This networking improved participants' social capital, a networking for the children's welfare. Robert Putnam (1995) defines social capital as “features of social life—networks, norms and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (p. 665). According to Putnam, bonding social capital is a network of homogenous group that shares a trusting relationship. Bridging social capital on the other hand is the networking of heterogeneous groups who come together to share ideas and information about a mutual project. At Balala, this bonding and bridging social capital derived from the coming together of parents and teachers for a mutual undertaking promoted a shared understanding of values and facilitated the building of a trusting relationship.

Balala's Two-Way Communication System

The communication system at Balala was relatively comprehensive considering that the school is in a developing country. The proprietor's objective was to ensure that parents were engaged in their children's education. In her own words, she stated,

We have been putting some proactive actions to get the parents involved in the development of their children. Adolescents are easily influenced by whatever they see around them, such as the TV and movies or even peer pressure, and for the child to be productive, the parents have to guide them even more.

Mrs. Dambo then listed type of strategies for involving parents which included communicating through newsletters, instituting the open-door school policy, and the establishing the parent-teacher conferences.

The school used newsletters to communicate with parents. At first these newsletters were sent through the children. By 2011, the school had added emails as a way of communicating with parents. The newsletters conveyed messages regarding policies, the school calendar, schedules, rules and regulations. The newsletters were sent to parents at the beginning of each term. Some parents also talked about newsletters that were sent as reminders of events. The newsletters were effective in delivering the school's messages.

In addition, some parents and teachers used diaries. During the interviews with both the proprietor and the headmaster, the issue of diaries came up. They informed me that these diaries were used in the primary school to provide two-way communication between the teachers and parents on children's assignments as well as messages about the child. Although the secondary school did not use these diaries, some mothers continued using the primary school diary system at the secondary level. They initiated contact with teachers through the diaries. Mrs. Bwalo stated,

I write in the diary asking the teacher to help my child on the subject. My child was in the Bambino primary school but now she is in the secondary school. So, I continued with the system that was in the primary school. I communicate with the teacher through the diary so that I should know directly from the teacher what to do and I tell him what my child needs in a particular subject.

Furthermore, two teachers introduced journals as a way of reaching parents of student in their classrooms. Parents were expected to sign the journal.

One of our teachers who taught Agriculture made a schedule where every child when he goes home, the parents had to sign that the child had done the assignment. That was his individual effort, but as a school we did not have that schedule. Mr. Mwaka

Open-Door Policy

The school had emphasized creating a school environment for Parental Involvement. Therefore, an open-door policy was instituted. Teachers were aware of this policy. Teacher Mwaka stated, *“In terms of coming to school, parents are encouraged. They can come any day. What I have seen is that the school has set times during the day when parents can come to talk to teachers.”*

Several parents commended the school for this policy. They felt it gave them opportunity to get information about their children and the school. Mr. Makamu simply stated, *“The school wants us to go there even if is a matter of getting information. They always let us know what to do.”* Some parents accepted the school’s invitation to meet with teachers. Mrs. Chosa provided the protocol for seeing teachers or the headmaster. *“Whenever we have problems, we book appointments with the teacher and we are welcome.”* Unfortunately, not all parents took advantage of this policy.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Despite the mode of communication between the school and parents,

administrators realized that communication between teachers and parents was inadequate and mostly one-way from the school. Teachers needed to hear parents' perspectives about their children's learning outcomes. Instead of sending students' grades by post, the school required parents to attend parent-teacher conferences at midterm and at the end of each term. All research participants at Balala agreed that the parent-teacher conferences provided opportunity for parents to work with teachers. However, teachers indicated that not all parents attended these conferences. As important as this idea was, some parents, because of their busy schedules, sent house workers as surrogate parents to collect the grades. Families' absence at these meetings negated the very purpose of parent-teacher conferences, two-way communication between parents and teachers. The solution was to mandate parents' presence that "*if the parent does not show up, the child would not be allowed in class*" Proprietor Mrs. Bwalo.

My observation of the parent-teacher conferences gave me an insight in the budding relationship between parents and teachers. While waiting for their turn, some parents conversed with the vice headmaster and/or other parents. Several objectives were achieved during the parent-teacher conferences. Parents not only discussed the child's performance but the teachers shared strategies with parents for using at home to help children who were struggling. Teacher Tengani also informed me that the educators took advantage of the parent-teacher meetings to "*advise parents to keep encouraging their kids to work hard in the subjects.*" At times, the headmaster was brought in to respond to issues beyond teacher's control. These conferences were not only providing information about the children's performance, but also played a role in opening communication lines and for building partnership between the parents and teachers. However, these

conferences did not provide much bridging capital for teachers and parents because almost all the time spent with parents was dedicated to discussing the children's academic performance.

Communication From Parents

Parents appreciated the school's efforts to involve them in children's education. Mrs. Kokani stated, *"I took my child to Balala because there I am able to work hand in hand with the teachers for they do inform us about my children."* The data, however, shows some parents' dissatisfaction with the communication frequency from the school. They wished to receive reports often so that they could *"assist the children before the end of term,"* Mr. Dolola. One teacher in 2011 was aware of the inadequate communication regarding grades and concurred with the need for better communication strategies that encouraged parents' frequent interactions with teachers, instead of depending on the twice a term parent-teacher conferences when they come to pick up school reports, and the defunct PTA meetings. Teacher Sekani decried the deficient communication regarding students' grades. He wished parents would interface with teachers in order to find out *"the progress of their children before the end of the term so that should know how their children are progressing, that way [they could] correct the problems before it is too late."*

Relevant, constructive, and continuous communication between the parties, in this case communication between the school and parents, was critical as a basis for building the bonds that enabled the relationship flourish. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2002) model shows the benefits of effective family-school communication which include improved student behavior and attitude toward education; better parents' skills in

providing support to children and better parent-teacher relationships. Patrikakou and Weissberg (1999) explain:

Two-way communication between home and school reflects the reciprocity that collaborative relationship must have in order to be most effective. Establishing a positive, proactive, persistent, and personalized communication channel between parents and educators increases parent participation in learning activities at home and at school. (p. 6)

The data shows that Balala made efforts to include parents in their children's education. The teachers strove to have a strong partnership with parents through the strategies established at the school. Nevertheless, it can be seen that two issues hampered their efforts. 1) The teacher's communication to parents mostly depended upon the administrative-mandated invitations, except for the occasional parent-initiated requests for discussion with teachers about their children's academic progress. 2) The PTA's failure in 2011 could have been exacerbated by the principals' lack of follow through due to other priorities or lack of emphasis from the proprietor. However, the principal's role in ensuring viable school programs was in question because principals set the tone for teachers and parents (Hall & George, 1999; LaBahan, 1995; MacNeil & Patin, 2005a, 2005b; Senge et al, 2000; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2006).

Section III: Educators' Perceptions About Parental Involvement

Educators' Perspectives on Parents' Involvement

Another emergent theme from the data analysis was educators' perspective about Parental Involvement. All 15 Balala educators highly valued parents' contributions to the school and sought their involvement in children's education. A noteworthy message from teachers concerning Parental Involvement was their call for parents' direct involvement in children's academic performance. They acknowledged parents' involvement in

rehabilitating the physical infrastructure, but wanted more interaction with parents to discuss children's performance. The following quotes represent teachers' attitudes towards Parental Involvement.

"I have come to realize that the child only gets to appreciate school for himself when it is validated at home hence the need for parents' involvement here at school."

Teacher Mwaka

Parents should work together with teachers because if parents divorce themselves from the happenings of the school, even if the teacher works with the children, he cannot raise the child's grades (performance). Teacher Jiyani

When a child fails to understand in class and when they go home and ask parents and when parents fail to understand why the grades are not good, they have to come back to us. Of course, they have to come and support their child. Teacher Kadule

Teachers associated Parental Involvement in children's education with better educational outcomes. They gave two examples why parents were needed at the school. Firstly, parents' school-based involvement increases students' academic performance. Headmaster Bwemba asserted, *"Students who do well are those whose parents come to collect the reports and are keen to come to school to discuss with teachers on children's performance."* Teacher Mwaka expressed the same view by discussing the negative consequence of noninvolvement. He stated,

I have noticed that a lot of children are ignored at home and parents are not involved even at school. When the children come to school they create a new home. So instead of studying, they find a group of friends who they trust and the things they don't talk about at home they tell their friends. And therefore, their attention is split and they do not do well. Teacher Mwaka

Secondly, a teacher observed that most of the parents who frequent the school for parent-teacher conferences or initiated contact with teachers, had children in the lower grades.

"What I have seen is that parents with children in Form 1 and 2 visit the school

often. They want to make sure that the child is not confused and understands what we are teaching,” Teacher Sekani.

This was corroborated by the PTA chairman who simply stated, *“Parents that attend meetings have students in Form 1 and 2 but parents whose children are in 3 and 4 think their children are old enough to handle issues.”*

These two factors are well documented in literature. High school students whose parents are involved at home and in school tend to have better educational outcomes (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Jeynes, 2007; Patrikakou, 2008). In addition, Parental Involvement is specifically important for children entering high school because students are unfamiliar with the rigors of secondary school. The first years of secondary school students have to navigate foreign, unstable environments. This is the time parents’ assistance is needed in order to negotiate the challenges they face (Cooper et al., 2000; Rice et al., 2015; Xu, 2002; Zarrett & Eccles, 2006).

Educators’ Perceived Challenges to Parental Involvement

Although the school had established processes to ensure Parental Involvement, not all parents came to school in spite of school invitations. Consequently, collaboration between teachers and parents was marred by parents’ busy schedules. The following comments capture educators’ frustration.

There is a challenge. You expect that all the parents are going to come, but you see that some come and others don’t. It is important for me that each and every parent should come and discuss with us. Teacher Jiyani

When we invite them to the school, some of the parents say, ‘I am very busy, I am attending a meeting.’ At the end of the term when we ask them to come for the reports when we can discuss the child’s progress, some parents send a driver or a maid. There is no discussion that we would want to have with the driver.
Headmaster Bwemba

One teacher, Mr. Kalowa, went further to blame parents for not supervising their children. He insinuated that some of the young people were on drugs, marijuana, or spent after school hours drinking. They believed peer pressure resulted in negative behavior and that parents were unable to curb their children's bad habits. Mr. Kalowa associated parents' absence at the school as an indication of their lack of interest in monitoring their children's whereabouts.

These findings support extant literature. Firstly, teachers often blame parents for children's academic and behavioral problems (Valencia, 1997; Venkatesan, 2011). Secondly studies show that apart from other life contexts, a major reason for parents' noninvolvement is their busy schedules (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Patrikakou, 2008).

Section IV: Parents' Perceptions About Parental Involvement

Parents' Perspectives of Their Involvement

Balala data analysis presented three recurrent themes regarding parents' perspectives about their involvement in their children's education (see Figure 11). These included parents' strategies for assisting children in their education (*Home-based Parental Involvement*); parents' initiatives and responses to school invitations (*School-based Parental Involvement*) and the challenges parents faced in trying to support their children (*Barriers to Parental Involvement*).

Home-Based Parental Involvement

Families at Balala used a gamut of strategies at home to influence their children's academic performance. The strategies included academic socialization, monitoring and providing structure, and assisting with homework (see Figure 12).

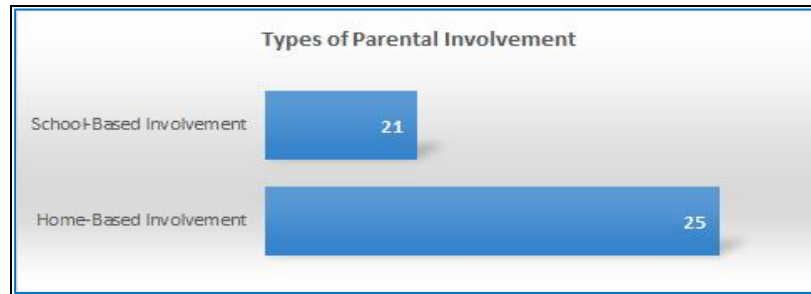


Figure 11. Types of Parental Involvement

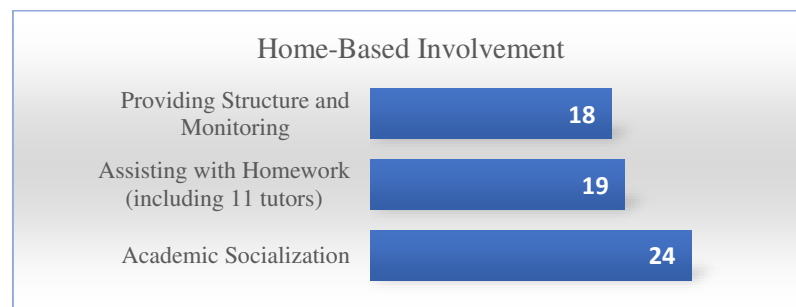


Figure 12. Home-based Involvement

1. *Academic Socialization.* Balala parents spent more time encouraging and motivating their children to work hard. Parents discussed their aspirations for their children’s future, elucidating their expectations regarding assignments and providing suggestion on how to conduct themselves in school. In addition, parents sought information about their children’s academic successes and problems. Some parents used negative dialogue and resorted to threats to encourage children to improve their study habits and academic performance. Others provided extrinsic motivation in the form of gifts for academic accomplishments. The following conversations are examples of parents’ academic conversations.

I tell my child the purpose of being educated. They think that because they have a car at home, their ultimate goal in life is to have a car. We tell them that what

they have at home does not belong to them. I tell them to go to school and learn so that in future they can add to what we have. When my child does not do well, I do not condone it. I act in such a way that the child knows that things did not go well. At the same time, I tell the child the purpose of being in school. Mrs. Dalo

“I tell her the woes of life and that if she does not pass, she would be living in Chigwada’s Village (a ghetto).” Mrs. Ponyani

“Through reasoning and persuasion, I discuss how he can do well in class. That is, I encourage him to work harder and keep on trying and never give up.” Mr. Makamu

“To give him encouragement so that he does well in school, I discuss the importance of never being absent but always being in class to listen to the teacher in order to understand what the teacher is teaching.” Mr. Dolola

“Sometimes, I say when he is preparing for his exams that if he passes and is No. 5 or 1, I would buy him the thing that he wants. That makes him work harder.” Ms. Bwalo

Academic conversation in the home may seem trivial in affecting children’s academic performance compared to direct hands-on assistance with assignments. However, Hill and Tyson (2009) conclude after conducting a meta-analysis of 50 Parental Involvement studies that academic socialization positively influences children’s academic outcomes. Interaction between parents and children provide social capital with lifelong benefits for the children. If the messages are internalized the child learns how to self-regulate and consequently value education (Coleman, 1988; Dufur et al., 2013; Trusty, 1999).

2. *Providing Structure for Studying and Monitoring Children.* The interaction with children also involved monitoring the children’s whereabouts, and checking that they had done their assignments. In some homes, parents provided structure to ensure

children had study time. This meant providing space for studying, reducing chores and restricting the use of media, such as TV, play stations, and cellphones. Several parents associated their need to monitor with the cost of education. They wanted to ensure that their investments in their children's education would be worthwhile. The following quotes summarize parents' objectives for monitoring and providing structure.

The children are lazy even to do their homework, so as parents we need to be following up, checking if the homework is done. We need to do this in order for them to succeed despite our busy schedules." Mrs. Bwalo

"I stop him from watching TV and playing his video games." Ms. Kweni

"I give her time to study, and ensure that I reduce her house chores." Mr. Kalaya

"When she comes home, I wait for her to rest and eat and do whatever she wants.

At 6 o'clock in the evening, I tell her to switch off the TV and go and study." Mr.

Gobede

Monitoring children's academic progress even at the high school level has been associated with better academic outcomes including fewer student dropouts, "reduction in substance use, aspiration for college, and higher standardized test scores" (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007, p. 2). Families realize that their efforts in providing structure reinforce better study ethics and positively affect academic performance. In addition, higher levels of monitoring reduce misconduct, aggression, and anxiety (Murphy, Marelich, Herberck, & Payne, 2009).

3. *Assisting With Homework.* Since many of the parents were middle class and had first degrees, they provided homework assistance, or used social networks to assist their children. Families used their social capital to ensure that children's academic

performance improved. Twenty parents indicated they provided hand-on hand assistance with their children's homework. Families who found the secondary school curriculum difficult deferred to the children's siblings to provide hand-on hand assistance with homework. Some parents who lacked skills or time engaged and paid for tutoring services for their children. Mr. Dolola's support for his child was *to arrange for extra classes with a tutor*.

School-Based Parental Involvement

Parents' goal to increase their children's prospects of getting into college, coupled with the school invitations to get involved and the educators welcoming atmosphere induced Balala parents to readily throw their support behind the school. Parents willingly paid the PTA fees every term without complaining even though Balala was a private school. However, the most significant school-based involvement directly affecting children's education was their interaction with teachers regarding student academic performance. The invitations for parent-teacher conference and the open-door policy encouraged parents' sense of efficacy to approach teachers or the heads of the school to discuss student-related issues. Fourteen parents shared stories of initiating contact with the school. The following are examples of such contact.

When I find out that my child is failing and is behind in her studies, I come to meet the teachers to find out what problems my child is facing and how we can work together to help my child to do well. Mrs. Bwalo

There are times when I make an appointment with his teacher because I am not happy with his performance. With the teacher, I discuss my child's problems and we work hand in hand to find solutions. Mrs. Chosa

In corroborating parents' statements, Headmaster Chilamba provided an example.

Parents come physically to the school when they want to see the teachers, such as the English teacher. However, if the teacher knows that the parent has come for a controversial issue, he reports the matter to the headmaster and we intervene. Many of the parents come to ask for reading materials or supplementary books they should buy for their children. Others come because the child is getting Cs and Ds in class and they want to know what to do.

These findings at Balala support the Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) theory about parents' motivational beliefs for getting parents' involvement in their children's education. She provides two factors which include: a) parents' role construction, "parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and the patterns of parental behavior that follows these beliefs" (p. 107); and b) parents' sense of efficacy—the belief that they are capable to make a difference in their children's education. The findings are evidence that Balala parents had confidence in interacting with teachers (school-based involvement) and supported their children at home through academic conversations, structuring time for study and providing hands-on assistance with homework.

Parents' Perceived Challenges to Parental Involvement

Data analysis revealed several factors that contribute to inadequate Parental Involvement at Balala. These factors included economic issues, time, lack of skills to help with assignments, and adolescent development issues (see Figure 13).

Financing children's education was a burden to many poor and some middle-class parents. Therefore, it was not surprising that ten parents indicated tuition as their barrier to Parental Involvement. This response highlights two factors: parents' inability to define Parental Involvement; and their lack of understanding about home-based or school-based involvement. They interpreted Parental Involvement in terms of their financial

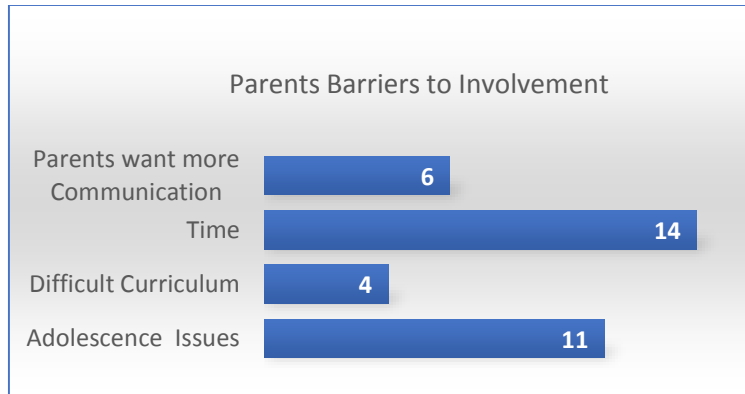


Figure 13. Barriers to Parental Involvement.

obligations to put their children in school. Although they believed in shared responsibility, their main focus was to find money for education. Tied into financial obligations were parents’ busy schedules—a recurrent theme throughout the study. Parents’ lack of time resulted in inconsistent Parental Involvement at school and at home.

Four parents cited their own level of education as a hindrance to home-based Parental Involvement. They neither had the skills for assisting their children nor understood the curriculum. A female parent, Mrs. Kweni, pointed out the difficulty of assisting her child using the new syllabus. *“The difference in the syllabus which the children are doing and the ones we did at school makes it difficult for us to help them.”*

Another parent asserted,

It is difficult to help a child with the content from the new curriculum. So I find it difficult to help children in the upper grades due to my poor background in the subjects. There is a difference between the syllabus being used by the student and what I knew. Mrs. Dalo

Adolescent development issues were also cited as barriers to Parental Involvement. Parents discussed peer relationships as the main cause for youth’s negative behavior. They lamented children’s laziness and poor study ethics. In fact, some parents

alleged their children had no concept of the value of education despite the parents' constant appeal for earnest hard work and their persistent cautioning about the consequences of illiteracy. Mr. Suntha complained,

I face resistance from the child. It becomes very hard to just convince my child that you are fighting for his own future. He takes school as a waste of time. In addition, as a parent, monitoring his class work becomes difficult.

This finding supports other findings that point to the significance of peer relationships to adolescent development (Sheldon, 2013). However, peer relationships often result in conflicts and antagonism between parents and children (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). During this period the teenager seeks to discover his identity (Erikson, 1968) through his association with peers and the media and may choose not to self-disclose about school. Parents have to navigate these challenges while providing guidance (Patrikakou, 2008).

The Partnership Context

The relationship between the educators and the parents was possible because most of the parents at Balala were educated. These Balala middle-class parents were able to interact with teachers because they had similar values. They understood the educational processes because they had gone through the secondary school system. They valued education for its benefits and therefore appreciated the work of teachers and recognized they had a part to play in the education of their children. According to Lareau (1987), schools are middle-class and communicate easily with middle-class parents. Middle-class parents easily adapt to school norms which they are familiar with and are able to work with the schools to benefit their children. Lareau's (2000) study of 12 parents provides an insight into middle-class parents' interaction with educators. In her report, she indicated

that education and knowledge, middle-class parents collaborated with educators, provide academic assistance at home, and where necessary engaged tutors to assist children to improve academic performance.

Since Parental Involvement is socially constructed, social capital theories provide a lens for viewing the relationships built between parents and educators. When the parents and the educators have similar values and perspectives, there is mutual understanding of the purpose of education. Having mutual perspectives influences the type of relationship that is built between educators and parents. In addition, parents' social capital enables them to socialize their children academically. Consequently, their interactions with their children result in better educational outcomes.

Chapter 4 Summary

Parents' role construction was associated to the administration's intentional creation of policies such as the parent-teacher conferences and the open-door policy, and the school invitations that resulted in a welcoming atmosphere. In addition, Balala parents own social economic status and levels of education contributed to parents' sense of efficacy. Consequently, parents interfaced with teachers, collaborated with the school in rehabilitating the school physical infrastructure and provided home-based support to their children.

Balala's proprietor and administrators played a critical role in establishing the atmosphere for collaboration between parents and the school. This collaboration was manifested in the partnership programs and the open communication lines between the school and parents. In addition, the school took action to ensure that parents had strategies for working with their children. The collaboration at the school can be

attributed to the proprietor's ideology and the willingness of teachers to embrace her vision. With this understanding of the need to include parents in children's education, educators sought to include parents in an appropriate environment for the development of a relationship between educators and parents.

Christenson and Sheridan (2001) discuss key elements for ideal school-family relationships strategies which include approach, attitudes, atmosphere and actions. At Balala, these strategies were apparent at a lower level. Parents were put in charge of the PTA. The teachers' attitude was favorable towards parents. They perceived them as capable of providing academic assistant to their children. Therefore, the school environment was conducive to the building of a relationship grounded on appreciation of each other's contributions.

The data also subtly suggests that parents' greatest responsibility was in financing their children's education. From their discussions, parents conveyed their responsibility for ensuring that their children were in school. Therefore, the payment of school fees could be regarded as parents' involvement in education. In addition, the data reveals that academic socialization appeared as the most important type of Parental Involvement.

In parents' home-based involvement, academic socialization was the most salient strategy of Parental Involvement. Parents' conversations with their children dwelt on their expectations, guidance and aspirations for their children's future. Home involvement also included monitoring and providing hands-on assistance with assignments. However, adolescent developmental challenges determined the type and level of Parental Involvement. School-based involvement included advocating for

children's welfare and curriculum changes; and assisting in the physical infrastructure development.

Several barriers were identified which included parents' busy schedules and need for better communication from the school. Nearly all Balala administrators attributed the marginal Parental Involvement of some parents to parents' busy schedules. Although the teachers and the proprietor were excited about the PTA and parents' participation, five years later changes had taken place. The PTA functions had phased out because of lack of follow-through. Only the parent-teacher conferences had continued. It was clear that the school had not concentrated on the PTA when the new headmaster took the reins. Four factors could have been the reasons for this failure: a) lack of orientation and training; b) educators may have perceived that PTAs in private secondary schools were invalid; c) the focus of the school could have shifted to other priorities such as the parent-teacher conferences which were flourishing; and d) there could have been poor interaction between the new PTA members.

What is significant in this school is how parents and educators shared values and responsibilities. Educators assigned value to parents for both contributing to the development of school infrastructure and for providing academic encouragement to their children. Parents were not invited to the school only to deal with behavioral problems, but were also invited to participate in the children's academic issues.

These findings underscore literature that highlights the role of educators' purposive decisions in building relationships and the effectiveness of social capital that is realized to benefit children (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Coleman, 1988). The environment set by the proprietor influenced the Parental Involvement practices at the school, and

teachers' attitudes toward parents and parents' level of involvement. Teachers positively valued parents' contribution towards children's academic progress. Parents trusted the school and were willing to invest their time and finances to ensure that their children succeeded. According to Coleman (1988), the partnership that developed between parents and the school depends upon obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of structures. These elements were evident at Balala. In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1994) indicates that when the two microsystems (family and school) unite in the mesosystem, members of each microsystem have expectations and obligations. Both microsystems play important roles in the relationship to bridge the gap or as Coleman (1988) posits, there is "closure of the social networks" or "intergenerational closure" (p. S105). This closure assists both parents and teachers in building trust which undergirds the relationship and encourages shared understanding of how to support and promote the children's interest.

CHAPTER 5

CHILDREN'S GENDERED SUPPORT IN EDUCATION

Which Gender Should Families Support in Secondary School?

This chapter discusses Parental Involvement in the context of gendered support. The decision to include gender issues emanated from the interview sessions at Kampango. Once data at Kampango showed significant information that needed clarification, I consequently decided to also pursue the topic at Balala to compare the findings.

Although the original interview protocol did not include this question on parental preference as to which gender to educate, the theme of gender bias arose early. A female participant, who was financially constrained, talked of a decision she had to make concerning her two children. She had to decide whether to continue her financial support of her boy, rather than his sister, who was in an examination class. The decision to only support her son displeased the daughter, who however, continued to attend classes, braving being discovered and being sent home. Mrs. Naga stated,

I gave the boy his fees first for he wanted to be in school. I felt that he needed to be supported. The girl was unhappy and refused to stay at home so she continued to go to school even though she knew if they realized she was attending classes she could be sent home. She survived by dodging the teachers when they came into the classroom to take roll call. The lady proprietor called me because she felt that if we did not pay the school fees the girl would have problems as this was the time for revisions for the national exams. I told her that I would be able to pay as soon as possible. Two days later I gave the girl her fees.

My curiosity was aroused and I had to find out from other parents whether this was a phenomenon experienced by other low socioeconomic status parents. From the focus groups and interviews that ensued, gender bias manifested itself as a theme. Consequently, I pursued the topic following Corbin and Strauss's (1990) theoretical sampling concept, which Birks and Mills (2011) defined as "the process of identifying and pursuing clues that arise during analysis in grounded theory study" (p. 69), to guide the research in the "next stage of data collection in process of concurrent analysis that continues cyclically until categories are fully developed or saturated" (p. 70).

The discussions concerning parents' choice to educate the boys, while marginalizing the girls, was very surprising to me as I had thought with the government's promotion of girls' education, parents would seriously consider the education of both sexes. Even though many of the parents at Kampango were educating both their sons and daughters in secondary schools, when asked their preference concerning which gender should be educated, their response was consistently dependent on their economic status and education level. The proprietor, Mr. Dule, summarized the situation thus:

"I have seen that many parents support both sexes. However, parents who have less money would encourage the boy more than the girl because they are not sure she would finish secondary school."

Organization of the Chapter

In this chapter, I discuss gender issues as related to Parental Involvement at both schools. Section 1 focuses on two aspects: a) The implication of culture in gendered support of children at Kampango—reasons why some parents provide unequal educational support to boys and girls; and b) Why some parents support both genders.

Section 2 draws attention to Balala administrators' and parents' perspectives on encouraging girls to obtain secondary education. Concluding remarks are presented in the last section of this chapter.

Section I: Implications of Culture at Kampango

Implications of Culture in Gendered Support of Children at Kampango

The data collected at Kampango in response to the question: Which gender should receive parent support in secondary school? is rife with socio-cultural issues and gender bias innuendos. Many of the parents indicated that, if they were forced to choose, their preference would be to educate the boy (Figure 14). In confirming parents' practices, Teacher Pendapenda narrated stories of parents that had chosen to keep their sons in school even though they had girls who were taking the MSCE Examination. Reasons for educating the boy ranged from boys' financial returns when educated, to the futility of educating girls. The findings at this school are presented as two social domains: Reasons for Preferring to Educate Boys, and Reasons for Marginalizing Girls in Education.

Last year, we had kids from the same family. The girl was in Form 4, the boy was in Form 3. When it came to paying school fees, the boy was always paid for and the girl in most cases, she was not paid for and she had to be sent home. And I remember asking the boy, why is it that it is this one always and not you? And the boy said, "I don't know" and he laughed. Even the Dalo's (pseudonym), it happened last year. The girl went home and John (not real name) was here. So, it is a fact it happens. Teacher Pendapenda

Reasons for Preferring to Educate Boys

Although parents acknowledged the importance of educating both children, financial issues and cultural issues often compelled them to prefer educating the boys over the girls. Families valued the boy. When financially constrained, parents only chose

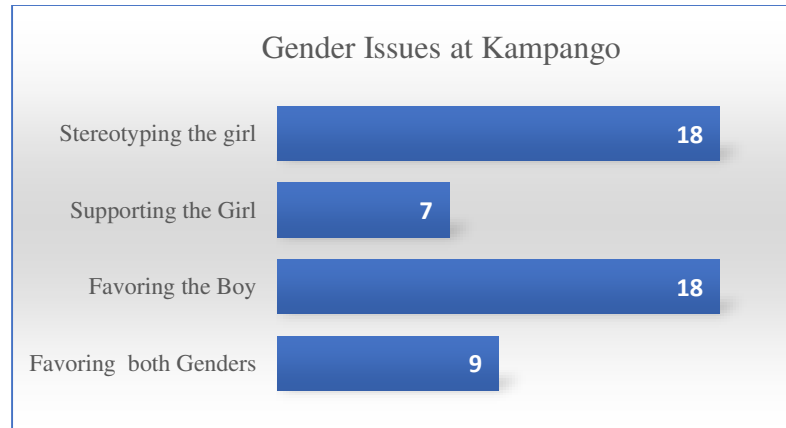


Figure 14. Gender issues at Kampango.

to educate the boys to prepare them for their future responsibilities as husbands and for taking care of their parents.

The data shows that the preference of boys was culturally dictated (Figure 14). Boys were preferred for education because they inherit the responsibility of the family wealth and affairs. Parents believed the boys would take care of them in their old age. Mr. Makani offered this explanation, *“culturally if a man is educated, he gets the responsibility of everybody at home,”* therefore he *“will (would) take care of them (you) when he is educated.”* Parents believed that education endorses this power and augments the authority to control and guide the family. Participants acknowledged *“boys really have the responsibility to direct affairs . . . because the boy is more reliable in all things”* (Mrs. Chulu). In fact, participants’ responses can be summed up in the words of Mr. Fodya who simply stated, *“Our culture values the boys.”* Because of the importance of their role in the family and in the community, boys have more educational support than girls.

You will find that in a home where there are a number of boys and a number of girls, if the parents did not have enough money to send all of them to school, the

priority will go to the boys. They will think about the boys first, and if they can, they are going to promote the girls. Teacher Pendapenda

Even that man will not control anybody because he is not educated (and) . . . if the boy does not finish Form 4, he cannot find work and if he does not find work, he may not even get married. So, it is important to educate the boy. Mr. Fodya

We, fathers, we want both to work hard so they can successfully complete their education. This happens when we have money for school fees for both. But when we only can afford to send one person to school, we send the boy. Mr. Donda

The education of boys deals with patriarchal values of male dominance. While men are expected to provide financial care, women are expected to be subservient to males. They are expected to be semi-illiterate because additional education would render them unsuitable for their gender roles. Women who have positions of authority in the community are expected to be subordinate to their husbands at home. According to the culture, men have the role of decision-making. Mr. Thomu explained:

If anything urgent happens at home that needs decision-making, the female who is educated and has money is not told, we go and find a brother to say, we need to solve this problem. . . . As an example, I have several sisters in my family. They always want the males to direct them. At a funeral, they will come and ask for help on what to do.

Teachers shared similar “mental models” (Senge, 1990) regarding the supremacy of males and the domination of females. During the teacher focus group one of the teachers affirmed, “*Even though there has been an evolution of culture as the young adopt globalization, this tradition (subjection of women) still lives on,*” Mr. Donda.

Although the discussion in the teachers’ focus group centered on their perspective of what parents do, an analysis of their statements affirms their belief of less education for women. This interpretation is evident in the subsequent discussion:

Yes, there are some people who are encouraging their daughters to go to school. But the spirit of thinking that a girl should be married is very strong in Malawi. Even an educated woman wants her daughter to be married . . . the mentality is that a man must do better than a woman. The belief is that the woman should

have basic education. Teacher Lendati

Just to give you an example, people sometimes are not willing to talk about it. Go to the homes of graduates, see their wives, even you can go to our wives here, and compare the education: our education and the education of our wives. You will find that a graduate will go for a Form 4 lady. Teacher Kwada

“Have you ever heard of people talking in the corridors to say, ‘It is not good to marry an educated woman?’ That’s a cultural belief; that’s our cultural perspective.”

Headmaster Limba

“Mrs. White said that highly educated women are tough to the suitor.” Vice

Headmaster, Mr. Masamba

Literature shows that in the patriarchal system, parents socialize children into gender roles as soon as they are born. By the time children are four years old, they are very much aware of their gender identity (Aina & Cameron, 2011). The promotion of gender roles inherently results in gender inequality and is often manifested in male domination and female subordination (Friedl, 1975; Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui, 2008). These gender values reflect Parson’s (1951) Marxist “warm bath theory,” which proposes that a woman's duty is to support her man so that he can productively provide for his family thus contributing to society. With this type of cultural belief, girls’ education is still deemed irrelevant even in the 21st century, because the girl is destined for marriage (Hemson, 2002).

According to Friedl (1975), male dominance is “a situation in which men have highly preferential access, not always exclusive rights, to those activities to which the society accords the greatest values, and the exercise of which permits a measure of control over others” (p. 7).

This “measure of control” begins with the types of privileges, activities given

boys, and types of behaviors modeled to them by the parents and the communities. Whereas the boys are socialized as intelligent, economic providers, and responsible for the family, the girls are considered as mentally weak, powerless, under men's control, and have domestic reproductive tasks and responsibilities, such as raising children, cooking, housework, and managing the family gardens (Bisika, Ntata, & Konyani, 2009; Chafetz, 2006; Samati, 2013; Shoola, 2013).

Reasons for Not Preferring to Educate Girls

In discussing the dilemma of supporting girls in secondary schools, participants justified why they marginalized girls. Girls had no financial returns for parents because they do not support parents as a rule. Parents reasoned that girls do not need education because their future husbands would care for them. Girls do not complete their education because of marriage or pregnancies. Families labelled girls as weak-minded, lazy, and unmotivated. Teachers perceived the girls as daydreaming about marriage.

Girls Have No Financial Returns

Families doubted whether their financial investment would be returned. Apparently, men's domination extended to the control of household income generated by their wives (Godfrey, 2010). This is why parents presumed that it is futile to put a girl in school because they knew girls in the culture are excluded from financial decisions of the very resources they have brought into the family.

“So, let's say the boy has not been educated and the girl is. Yes, he will control what happens, even if the one who gets the money is the girl.” Mrs. Chulu

“It is risky in that even if she has just finished secondary school, when she gets married to somebody, you are not able to be helped by her.” Mr. Fodya

Teacher Mkwezalamba provided the reason why parents are reluctant to support the girls. *“In some of our cultures, the children are not yours but the female’s. . . . If I educate them, there is nothing I will get. If I educate them, somebody will marry her.”* A parent in the focus group affirmed these assertions, but added that girls however subtly provided financial help to their parents. *“What happens is that the ladies, often go home to see parents and, therefore, they are able to help; they are at the center of helping parents.”* Mr. Thomu

Literature is ambivalent as to which of the sexes helps their parents more than the other. Lee, Parish, and Willis (1994) and Raley and Bianchi (2006) affirms that sons assist parents more than daughters, while Sultan, Sultan, and Bould (2004) showed that an educated girl can assist parents financially more than illiterate sons. From experience, I know that many educated single and married daughters help their parents financially.

The notion that educated women accept to be subservient to men, a traditional prescribed women’s role, is a manifestation of Bourdieu’s social theory of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This symbolic violence is articulated as a type of invisible violence against women, when they are identified as weak, inferior to men, and subjected to male dominance. Those thus subjected accept the treatment and perpetuate the patriarchal systems of male headship and dominance. Consequently, the women begin to act the part supporting their husbands in choosing boys for education rather than girls. The following statements provide examples:

“To say the truth—the one that has to go to school first is the boy.” Mrs. Tebulo

If you want to educate both children and you do not have enough school fees, if the parent goes to his wife and says, “We do not have enough money to send both to school,” the wife is the one who says, “Send the boy because she is going to help me at home to draw water.” Mr. Makani

It is not surprising that parents' mental models are transferred to girls and become the girls' habitus. Consequently, girls begin to believe that education is not important.

This data suggests that culture and socio-economic status are intricately related to parents' attitudes and choice to support boys in education rather than girls (Bharadwaj, Dahl & Sheth, 2015; Shoola, 2013). Since secondary education in Malawi is not free, tuition and school fees negatively affect household finances and many middle-class parents (working class) struggle financially to put their children through school because education, a cultural capital, is viewed as a step towards economic stability for the family (Dumais, 2002). According to the cultural beliefs, boys have better economic returns than girls (Hyde & Kadzamira, 1994a; Samati, 2013) and the education of girls does not convert into future family dividends. In Chisamya, DeJaeghere, Kendall, and Aziz-Khan's (2011) study on problems in achieving gender equity in education conducted in Bangladesh and in Malawi, findings revealed that parents regarded education "as comparably useless for girls because they had fewer economic opportunities linked to schooling" (p. 751).

Girls Fail to Complete Education Because of Marriage or Pregnancy

Findings in this study also revealed that parents questioned their support of their female secondary school children. They believed it was futile to invest in the girls' education because many girls became pregnant while in school or eloped. Hence, Mr. Thomu's declaration, "*It is risky to educate the girl.*" Other interviewees concurred and gave reasons why:

"The girl would get involved in affairs and get pregnant . . . The parents can

support her, but the girl may get pregnant and disappoint them. Therefore, it is important to educate the boy.” Mr. Nyamata

When parents don't have money to pay for both, they will tend to pay fees for the boy because they fear that the girl will get pregnant any time, or she will get married. They assume, however, that the boy will go on with the school until he finishes. Mr. Moto

Yeah, the culture encourages impediment on the education of the girl. It is very sad that until now there are parents who still, if given between boys and girls, educate the boy because they think the girls will get pregnant. Mr. Chidothi

Beyond parents' financial limitations, girls face gendered cultural constraints that are manifested in the way they are treated and supported (Bisika et al., 2009; Hyde & Kadzamira, 1994a; Samati, 2013). Families' trepidation about supporting girls arises from a cultural understanding that once a girl reaches puberty, she is ripe for marriage. (Bisika et al., 2009; Samati, 2013). This tradition is still held by many rural Malawians and city dwellers of low economic status. Since age 15 is considered the beginning of a marriageable age, the community expects girls to be married by late adolescence to secure their future (Holkamp, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2014). In fact, government efforts on gender equity and parity in education are challenged by parents' attitudes towards girls' education and parents' emphasis on marriage (Williams, Mueller, & Kilanski, 2012). The headmaster and a teacher acknowledged this practice.

“Culturally girls are encouraged from a tender age that they are going to get married. The whole process of initiation in the village is geared toward bringing to girls awareness of their future role.” Headmaster Limba

Culturally, some rites of passage teach the girls to prepare to be good wives and mothers and are not encourage to be educated or to be independent. They are encouraged to be good housekeepers, not good at academics. Teacher Mkwezalamba

As literature shows, socializing girls to get married often results in premarital sex and pregnancies (Samati, 2013). It is ironical that pregnancies resulting from this type of socialization carry a stigma for the girl (Samati, 2013) and embarrassment for the parents. Families felt supporting the boy was important because, while the girl was forced to drop out of school the boy who impregnated the girl faced little or no repercussion, a concern Mr. Tumani shared, *“You see the girls may not learn and they can get pregnant but the boys are covered.”* Sutherland-Addy (2008) findings confirm this previous practice of no repercussions for the male perpetrator whose education is uninterrupted.

Apparently, secondary school statistics substantiate these parents’ concerns. The secondary school girls’ dropout rate due to marriage and pregnancies in 2007 was approximately 8% (Population Council, n.d.). Although there was a high rate of youths entering Malawian secondary schools compared to other countries, half of female adolescents were married by the age of 18 (United Nations Population Fund, 2012). In fact, UNFPA records that the rate of child marriages in Malawi, which stood at 47% in 2000, has not changed fourteen years later.

In summary, parents’ cultural beliefs and social economic status influence their preference concerning which gender to educate. Mrs. Chulu’s comment sums up parents’ preference of boys and parents’ troubling decisions that discriminate against girls and impacts their education.

To say the truth, the one that has to go to school first is the boy. The one who really has to go to school is the boy, because the boy is more reliable in all things. Even if you have (financial) problems, the first to go to school is the boy.

Yaish and Katz-Gerro (2012) propose that people’s “preferences (cultural tastes) are antecedents of behavior (cultural participation),” “behavior, more than preferences, is constrained by economic resources (e.g., income),” and “preferences, more than

behavior, are shaped by cultural resources, through the habitus” (p. 172). Hemson (2002) writing about parents’ perspective regarding girls’ education in Africa pointed out that parents “sacrifice the educational opportunities of daughters for those of sons, although this is now changing, but, in the most traditional sectors of South African Society, there is still less attention given to women’s educational advancement” (Hemson, 2002, p. 27).

Girls Are Weak-minded

Cultural values on gender role influenced parents and teachers’ perception of students’ abilities and qualities. Individual parents as well as teachers stereotyped the girls according to the cultural beliefs and expectations about female roles in society. Consequently, parents attributed weak-mindedness to girls’ low academic ability, lack of study ethics and failure to conceptualize their educational aspirations. In addition, the prescription for the “weak-thinking” label was given because of girls’ emotive nature and parents’ inability to inspire their children to study. The following conversation elucidates the term ‘weak-thinking.’

“It is more difficult to raise girls than boys. Girls have a different way of living.

They envy others a lot, especially if others have better things at school.” Mr. Dzuka

M: The girl sometimes succumbs to peer pressure. And of course, there is the environment [belief] that a girl cannot go far with school. Therefore, the girl needs encouragement.

I: I thought boys also need encouragement because they too have their own weakness?

M: But the girls have more difficulties compared to boys.

I: What weaknesses do the girls have different from boys?

M: The girls are weak in thinking.

I: Like what?

M: If the girl thinks that she can accomplish nothing by being in school (because girls drop out of school when she has these types of thoughts), then she does not go further with school. While as for the boy, he becomes distracted by what he does like, beer and other activities that he gets into. If you work with the boy, it is easier to curtail these problems. But with a girl, if she really thinks that she cannot do well in school, it results in poor performance.

This stereotyping of girls was also revealed in Chisamya et al. (2011) study. They found that 64% of male participants and 56% of female participants perceived girls as less intelligent than boys. A validation of this perception came from the Mbilizi (2008) study that showed girls had a 20% lower pass rate than boys. The data from the MoEST (2008) study shows the difference between boys' and girls' 2006 MSCE pass rate. Out of 45,922 boys who sat for the examination, 20,735 passed (45%). On the contrary, out of 20,735 girls, only 9,775 passed (30%). Kampango parents attributed girls' this type of poor academic performance to peer pressure and their lack of interest in education.

The problems that I really find are . . . she is never home to study but her aimlessness—never wanting to be home. I tell her to spend time at home studying. When I tell her to give herself time to study, I make sure she does not have chores at home. She tells me that she cannot study by herself. I really don't know what her problem is. Sometimes I think that she is not intelligent. Mrs. Kambale

Some days when they don't want to study, they go off with their friends. Sometimes their friends come and invite them to go out. They take them to this place and that place. My wife fails to control them because she is a woman. The children also see that she has no power over them. Mr. Molele

Literature offers evidence that girls' tendency to conform to peers is greater than that of boys (Coleman, 1961). Thus, the parents' observations were significant. However, parents may have resorted to stereotyping because of two factors: their children's lack of self-disclosure about their whereabouts, and the difficulty parents had of motivating children to study. Consequently, this type of cultural stereotyping could have had a negative influence on the students to the point where they become unmotivated to study (Graham & Hurley, 2005).

Girls Daydream About Marriage

While parents associated girl's laziness with weak-mindedness, teachers attributed girls' laziness to the daydreaming about marriage since education was not viewed as important as marriage. When a mother inquired why her daughter was not doing well in school during the focus-group session, the headmaster responded: "*Her biggest weakness is laziness. She is just lazy. Your daughter is lazy. . . . She associates with older girls even though she is young. . . . Sometimes she looks as if she is studying, but in actual fact she is thinking of other things.*" Laziness, as defined by the teachers in their focus-group session, connotes dreaming of marriage as an envisioned aspiration for girls.

"Another problem you find is that most of the girls don't do well in school. That spirit of laziness, that spirit that I am going to get married is there." Mr. Lendati

You talk to the girls and they will openly tell you, 'I am going to get married. And my boyfriend drives a Benz.' They are not joking. They are serious, because they think there is no need for getting educated if they are going to get married. Mr. Pendapenda

Teacher's definition of girls' laziness borders on irrational thinking—stereotyping which originates from the participants' cultural values and dictates how life is perceived. The teachers' generalizations, though seemingly grounded in what they observed, did not apply to all the girls. Reyna (2000) defines stereotypes as:

Beliefs about the nature or quality of a person or group that are summarily applied to group members and are thought to reflect predictable characteristics and behaviors of that group. If stereotypes are to serve any simplifying or predictive function, they must have a notable degree of generalizability across many group members in many contexts, and the attributes and behaviors described by the stereotype must be relatively reliable across time. (Reyna, 2000, p. 92)

In addition, Grobman (1990) explains that we stereotype others when we have very little knowledge about them, for we rely on an unfair judgment based on what we

consider to be the attributes of the group they belong to. Universally, women are deemed as the “weaker sex,” and in the classroom, they are socialized as unequal to boys. In the words of Allport (1998), “Women are viewed as a wholly different species from men, usually an inferior species. Such primary and secondary sex differences are greatly exaggerated and are inflated into imaginary distinctions that justify discrimination” (p. 111). These patriarchal values pervaded the society that mothers perceived themselves as weak and applied this label equally to girls at school (Samati, 2013), a type of symbolic violence. However, despite being viewed as less capable than men, women can have academic achievements at par with men and sometimes above and beyond them (Patton, Woolley, & Hong, 2012; Ullah & Wilson, 2007). In addition, women can be high achievers, attain high status, such as a village chief, or exhibit entrepreneurial skills for running a business superior to men.

Reyna (2000) proposes two functions of stereotypes: “descriptive,” providing a picture of what the social group is; and “explanatory” (p. 86-87) elaborating on the status of the group. Although teachers labelled the girls as ‘weak’ and ‘lazy’ they were trying to explain the girls’ behaviors, yet they had little knowledge of why students behaved the way they did. This was evident from the proprietor’s and the headmaster’s comment of having “no control over whatever goes on at home.” Therefore, it is safe to assume that the student’s behaviors at home were beyond the educators’ knowledge. In the absence of a suitable reason for the perceived laziness, they tried to explain the phenomena with their own opinions.

From the data, it seems the perceived females’ lack of motivation to study, may have stemmed from the environmental hurdles they faced. A contributing factor could be

that girls did not understand the material taught in class enough to study at home on their own. Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development theory addresses how students need assistance to go beyond their understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, students who do not live in close proximity to the school, who have to walk or catch buses to and from school, may be tired by the time they get home, nullifying their resolve to study. A sentence by a member of the parent focus group who lived far from the school, confirms this perspective. Mr. Makani disclosed,

They are tired because there are sports at school and they have to walk home. By the time they get home, it is late. By the time they have eaten and want to study, they are tired. They sleep and get up early to go to school. This is not the same for boarders. The day scholars have no time to study.

Another parent also alluded to the proximity to the school in his inquiry about his daughter's low academic performance, thus, "*The reason she (Grace) is not doing well is because she is a day scholar and because of the distance she has to travel to school,*" Mr. Fodya.

Perceptions Regarding Teachers' Attitudes

The discussion regarding the marginalization of girls elicited much laughter from the teachers. The laughter was a cultural way of showing agreement, but also conveying their nervousness as well as their disparagement of women. Dumais (2002) indicates that habitus can be manifested in one's mannerism such as this type of laughter. I was surprised that teachers, who are supposed to promote equality between the sexes at school, could blatantly quip about how they would not marry educated women, an attitude I would have thought belonged to the illiterate. However, the teachers were behaving according to their habitus. This type of disposition "encompasses the idea that assumptions can be appropriated and reappropriated; hence, old beliefs can persist and

continue to have currency, or cultural capital, in alternate settings where you might not expect them to be widely shared” (Green, 2013, p. 150). The discussion clarified the parents’ beliefs while subtly revealing teachers’ beliefs that the education of girls was unnecessary. The teachers may have confessed to this because they observed the cultural confusion in society as communities embraced globalization. It is well documented that globalization diminishes traditional values (Yaish & Katz-Gerro, 2012).

I cannot emphatically say that teachers perpetuated inequality at the school; however, teachers’ responses seemed to imply cultural bias against girls’ education. Their behavior showed deep-rooted dispositions which are culturally inherited (Green, 2013), habitus that was a disconnect between their teaching profession and their practices within and without the school system. According to Tzanakis (2011), the role of education is to transmit and perpetuate values of the dominant class. Therefore, the school and its teachers model and reinforce behaviors that are salient at home and ubiquitously upheld in the society (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). However, it is wrong for teachers who have the most cultural capital (education) to give students (Dumais 2002) to use their power to perpetuate wrong values. The Kampango data suggests that teachers may have promoted and propagated male patriarchy, thus discriminating against girls. For the teachers to strongly affirm the parents’ perspective, it was because they also embodied the same cultural beliefs, preferences, and behaviors, which are a result of familiar social structures and their own experiences. Bowles and Gintis (2002) attest that “schools influence which cultural models children are exposed to; and immerse children in a structure of rewards and sanctions” (p. 13). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), in discussing the reproduction theory, define habitus as, “the product of internalization of the principles of a cultural

arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after pedagogic work has ceased” (p. 31). These values, which had been internalized, had become ‘habitus,’ a way of life for them and were exhibited in the discussions and in their practices.

Marginalization of girls cannot be eradicated without teachers taking a stand in evaluating themselves and their values in light of their work of providing education. Lovat, Monfries, and Morrison (2004) argue for self-reflexivity to ensure justice in providing services, without which there is no integrity. They maintain, “One cannot remain in the same place once one has confronted one’s past and one’s self” (p. 166). In another article, Lovat (2010) further states that once a person knows himself, then his actions should be congruent to his new perspective. In addition, Freire (1993) argues that education should liberate and foster radical paradigm shift in order to battle repressive beliefs and values. Unfortunately, parents and teachers who have grown up with patriarchal ‘mental models,’ continue to uphold these unfair repressive elements of culture. Bowles and Gintis (2002) argue that schools do reproduce dominant cultural beliefs whether positive or negative. Furthermore, they indicate that,

In the absence of the oblique transmission of the disadvantaged culture form, the advantaged cultural form always drives out the disadvantaged form. Second, when the oblique transmission of the disadvantaged trait is present, a positive frequency of this trait can persist even when some fraction of agents are switching to the advantaged form to increase payoffs. (p. 14)

It was unfortunate that despite government efforts to address the issues of gender parity and equity in education, these teachers continued to perpetuate the very norms which their own education was supposed to have liberated them from. As role models, their attitudes and preferences limited their effectiveness in implementing girls’ education. Literature on gender and education shows that many teachers in the Sub-Saharan African countries have negative or apathetic attitude towards girls’ education

(Chimombo et al., 2000; Johannes, 2010; Klein, 2010). However, the school is responsible for deliberately putting in place strategies to ensure that girls stay in school. This includes applying ideologies that engender a better environment for the girls including changing teachers' mental model and attitudes toward gender equity.

Why Some Parents Support Both Genders

Notwithstanding parents' cultural beliefs, and the trepidation of financial and investment loss, findings showed that parents were interested in educating both male and female children. These parents valued education and were amenable to equal support of both sexes to obtain an education because they realized that boys also had different problems than girls. However, the underlying reasons for the support were the same; to favorably support the child who would most likely complete secondary school, be self-reliant and in the future, help them. Therefore, the more intelligent or better behaved (whether boy or girl) received parents' support. Incidentally, some parents who stated they would support both genders also showed partiality to girls. One gets the sense that parents perceived girls as vulnerable and needed help to consider how to plan their futures. They believed education could help the girl to be self-reliant, and thus have the ability to live above the poverty line.

So, we give them examples that you should be a nurse, etc. We encourage more the girl than the boy because we want her to be diligent in her studies and we try to ensure that she finishes school. We even tell her that men may not be interested in her if she is not educated. Mr. Donda

We, fathers, we want both to work hard so they can successfully complete their Both should be encouraged to get an education with the purpose that when educated, the children will be independent. If we only educate one, the other one will suffer without an education. It is important that you encourage both to get an education. If they want to get as far as possible in their education, they should be encouraged to do so. Mrs. Mbale

“If the girl is educated, she will still provide the help.” Mrs. Tebulo

“When I have no money, I first consider the one in Form 4. The girl is in Form 4 and the boy is in Form 3.” Mrs. Kambale

Females do better than boys in school. In those days, parents said that the boy would do better but now parents are seeing that the girls even though they may get pregnant, parents have the responsibility to take the child to allow the girl to continue with school. Today all children, male and female, are sent to school. It is not only girls that have problems. Boys also are difficult; they start smoking marijuana and fail. What we see is that the one who helps a lot after being educated is the girl, so females should be educated. Business Woman (Mrs. Bota)

Furthermore, parents were also aware of other difficulties adolescent girls faced and were concerned about girls’ responses to life stresses such as: their reaction to body-image disturbances (Botta, 1999), coping mechanism to social pressures, i.e., relational victimization by peers (Crick et al., 2001); academic pressures (Pomerantz, Altermatt, & Saxon, 2002), and conformity or nonconformity to parents’ rules (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). Families’ perception of girls’ vulnerability stemmed from the cultural-specific demands for marriage to safeguard the family honor, and to avoid sexual stigmatization. With an awareness of these challenges and driven by fears for their daughters’ futures, Kampango parents were compelled to support and empower the girls through education.

Families’ paradigm shift toward supporting both sexes was a result of globalization and the changing political environment. Families recognized that male dominance traditions robbed girls of their potential, and stymied societal development. It suffices to say that parents saw the transformation happening in society and credited it to education while ascribing these detrimental traditions to illiteracy. They also pointed out that these traditions were disappearing.

Here in town things of culture are vanishing. I know that in the villages, there are still parents who would rather support the boy because they think the girl can get married and not help them. But for me, I believe that a child's gender does not

matter. Both should be supported. Mr. Kalulu

“Definitely education is bringing a lot of revolution to the Malawi culture. Things are really changing. People are looking at culture in a different way than they used to do without education.” Mr. Khola

In addition, educated parents assimilated new standards that enabled them to become efficacious in supporting girls despite their concerns. Families who were exposed to higher culture through education were able to transfer their cultural capital and aspirations to their children. Consequently, a culture of illiteracy and its subsequent cultural impediments was changed and they embraced education as a building block that contributes to a better future while safeguarding the children against early marriages.

This is very common in parents who have not been exposed to school. But parents who have been exposed to school, but are originating from the same part of the community are little by little, not little by little but actually running away from that practice. They would rather encourage the girl. Parents who are exposed to schooling encourage students to do well in class. Teacher Kwada

“Some people in the villages who never went to school feel that girls should not be educated, but these day, many people value education and they want both boys and girls to be educated.” Mrs. Bota

Culturally, not many people would think so. But now things are changing. We are getting educated and there is nothing harmful. Actually, these days we see parents hugging their daughters, hugging their sons and mothers hugging their sons. But there is nothing wrong sitting next to your daughter to assist her, to tell her this and that. There is nothing wrong, but it is true, culturally, especially in the rural set up that is really looked at this as something very big. Mr. Nkomba

These changes in parents’ dispositions were reflected in school intake at Kampango. In 2011, I asked the girls’ section headmaster for his views concerning parents’ preferences regarding which gender they supported especially when it came to paying school fees. By this time a revolution had taken at the school. Kampango had

adopted policies for assisting parents who had many children at the school, making educating both genders attainable which resulted in increased enrollment at both sections (boys and girls) as parents were given the opportunity to enroll both children.

Section II: Implications of Culture at Balala

Balala Educators' Attitude Toward Girls' Education

Propelled by the significant finding on the disparate parental support of boys and Girls at Kampango, I chose to also explore the gender issue at Balala Secondary School for two reasons. First, literature on gender and education in the early and mid-2000s in Malawi, portrayed a decline in teenage girls' (aged 14 and up) rate of secondary school participation (National Statistics Office & Macro International, 2004). Second, Yin (2009) proposes replication logic of important findings. He states,

Upon uncovering a significant finding from a single experiment . . . pressing priority would be to replicate this finding by conducting a second, third, and even more experiment . . . to see whether the finding could still be duplicated. Only with such replications would the original finding be considered robust. (p. 54)

Using the same question, "*Which gender should parents support in secondary school,*" Participant responses fall into two categories: School's Ideological Influence on Girls' Education and Families Support Girls More Than Boys (see Figure 15).

Proprietor's Ideological Influence on Girls' Education

Befitting the proprietor's religious beliefs, the school's philosophy was to provide a gender-sensitive environment conducive to promoting girls' education. The proprietor wanted her ideas to correspond to Baha'u'llah's principles written in his Holy Book, which stated, "parents had the responsibility of seeing that both girls and boys were educated and that should they neglect this duty, Baha'i institutions should step in to

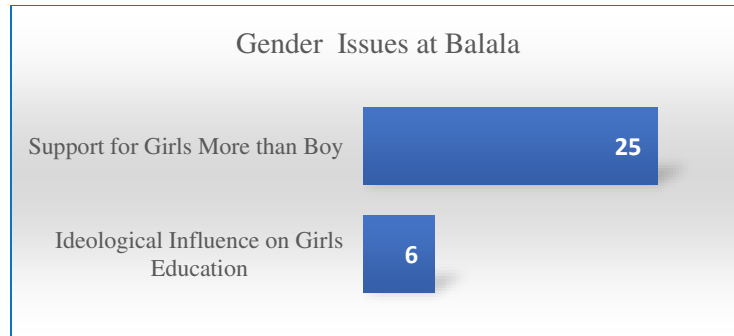


Figure 15. Gender Issues at Balala

ensure its fulfilment” (Cole, 1998). Cole indicates that the Baha’i religion “gave somewhat higher status and privileges to women than was common in Islamic Law” (p. 172).

In accordance to these principles, dormitories were built at the school. This encouraged parents to keep their daughters in school. In providing an atmosphere of equality and respect where the girls are not intimidated, parents were assured that their children could attend as day scholars. The proprietor, Mrs. Dambo discussed at length her religious beliefs as the reason why the school had focused on equality for both boys and girls. She stated,

We believe in Bahá’u’lláh’s principles regarding equality between men and women. The equality is about equal opportunities, where a girl-child is educated the same way as a boy-child. Actually, one of the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh says that if a parent had only school fees for one child and yet he has a boy and a girl, he should educate a girl rather than a boy. This is revolutionary because it is opposite to what people think.

In an environment where educators and parents favored boys’ education, the proprietor’ adherence to her religious beliefs established an environment that facilitated girls’ education. Both the PTA chairman and Operations Manager confirmed the uniqueness of the school and the school’s efforts to champion girls’ education.

I could say that this school is different. It is odd because I can tell you that 60% of the students are girls. You can see that the school supports girls because it started a boarding school for girls and girls are given more support. Mr. Balaka

“Here I think we have gender imbalanced. People always say gender imbalanced when it involves boys. But here it’s imbalanced because we have about 60% girls than boys,” Mr. Chidambo.

Apart from encouraging the girls to achieve academically through study periods in the dormitory, the school also provided career counseling. These efforts resulted in better academic outcomes. More girls than boys excelled academically at Balala.

At the secondary section, we have tried to come up with a program where girls are promoted. We believe that a girl child given an opportunity to get educated can do better than a man. At one time, we brought in nurses from Kamuzu Central Hospital, they came with career talks. At least it motivated some students who said, “I think I also can be somebody like her.” Teacher Kalowa

At this school, we have a few girls who are able to perform better compared to the boys. Children that are doing well are girls and are well-supported by parents. Now if you take a girl child or a student, a lot of the parents that come together, father and mother to pick up their child will be coming for the girls. And most parents that come are mothers. Teacher Mwaka

Here, if you look at the university selection, only three boys were selected; the rest were girls. If you look at this term’s results, we have two girls and only one boy at the top of the Form 3 class. In other classes, all the top three are girls. For academic performance, the girls are doing better than the boys. The reason is that we have a girls’ boarding. . . . The girls who are day scholars are also doing very well. As you can see on this list, it’s not all that are boarders; some of these are day scholars. Headmaster Njoka

Parents, who did not understand the proprietor’s worldview only, frowned upon the provision of boarding facilities for girls only. These parents felt that the proprietor was favoring girls to the boys’ disadvantage. Her response to these parents was, “‘I give all children equal opportunity.’ Although they are unhappy and feel that we favor girls, we do this because the ground is not level and opportunities are not equal for the girls.”

This statement is a remarkable view of the gender disparity in the country. The

intentionality of the proprietor to focus on equality for all students while specifically creating opportunities for girls, gave credence to the influence of worldviews on education. Her belief systems and values become the basis for developing the type of services the school delivered. The proprietor's adherence to the Baha'i faith propelled her to take a transformative approach in providing a safe environment for girls to get an education.

Parents Support Girls More Than Boys

Parents at this school are inspired to educate both boys and girls. With the school's example of promoting girls' education through the provision of boarding facilities, more girls than boys were enrolled in the school. The fact that the school has 60% girls is indicative of parents' support for girls' education. Guardians of daughters more often than those of boys visited the school to: a) discuss their child's performance; b) pick up school reports at the end of the term; and c) come to the school to pick up their daughters at the end of the day. Headmaster Chidambo observation was that parents favored girls more than boys. He concluded by saying, "*The greater percentages of parents that come to collect school reports are those that have girls. They are keen to know how their girl is doing.*" Even in paying school fees, parents who have both genders at the school, choose to pay for the girl first.

We have some parents who have 1, 2, 3 students in the school. So, they have two girls and then a boy. When it comes to paying school fees, they start paying school fees for the girls or girl and then they tell you, "I will pay for the other one later." My observation is that most parents favor the girl. Headmaster Chidambo

Although in agreement with the other parents, one parent made some distinctions in the type of support she gives her children.

I support the boy more than the girl; maybe because the boy is younger than the

girl. I think the boy needs more support from me. Culturally I would support the boy. But for me because I am single, I would think differently because they need the same kind of assistance. Ms. Beni

In discussing parents' preferences regarding the support, they gave their children, the headmaster stated that while most of the parents were educated and held ministerial jobs, only 25% of the parents, though middle-class were illiterate. The socioeconomic status of parents may be the reason why parents in this school supported their daughters' education. According to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2015), girls from higher social classes have better chance of completing secondary school in many developing countries including Malawi.

Conclusion

Robert Stake (2005) indicates that multicase study is not intended for comparisons for "direct comparison is somewhat out of place in such a mix" (p. 84) but for understanding the topic or quintain under study. However, the comparison he suggests is "a grand research strategy, a powerful conceptualization, usually fixing attention on one or a few variables" (p. 83). Therefore, this section is designed to provide a snapshot of major findings on how child's gender influences parents' support in education in both schools. Two factors influenced how girls were supported in these schools: the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on type of support; and the school leadership influence to support girls in their education.

The support girls received depended on parents' level of education and socioeconomic status. Although parents at Kampango sent their girls to secondary school, they often worried about finances and whether the girls would complete secondary school. The girls had practical difficulties resulting from their parents' socioeconomic

status. The data also seem to indicate that some girls who have male siblings in secondary schools are at a disadvantage when parents prefer the education of boys. On the other hand, Balala girls were more privileged due to their parents' socioeconomic status and received much support from their parents.

Notwithstanding the provision of boarding facilities for girls to improve their academic performance, the school environment, however, differed. Each school embraced dissimilar values influenced either by deep-seated beliefs steeped either in traditional values or in religious principles. Balala specifically strategized girls' education following Baha'u'llah's philosophy of equality between boys and girls. As a proprietor, Mrs. Dambo was able to implement her religious principles and values influencing the school ethos and culture. As a result, parents had confidence in the school's approach and its emphasis on girls' education.

Although parents sent their girls to obtain secondary education, the Kampango proprietors' emphasis on academic results somehow led teachers to stereotype girls who could not reach the academic standards required. The data revealed negative teachers' attitudes toward girls. In addition, Kampango girls' support was limited because parents had deep-seated cultural beliefs.

As established in this study, the proprietors' goals for the schools determined the type of environment that either supported or disenfranchised girls at the school. The school leadership set the tone and created the school climate (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996). Despite the marginalization of girls revealed in the Kampango data, parents recognized and appreciated education for its social outcomes beyond financial stability. This recognition of the value of education is the fundamental factor that continues to play

a role in changing parents' cultural inclinations (habitus) and mental models regarding the education of girls. In addition, these changes could also be attributed to globalization and its aftermath—the inevitable cultural changes and the government's gender-sensitive educational policies adopted from the UN Millennium Development Goal #3 to promote gender equality and empower women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education (Ministry of Development Planning & Cooperation, 2007).

Notably, as discussed above, parents in this study put their children in school for two reasons: to ensure the children can be self-reliant and independent and to secure their own economic future. Rodgers (2003) describes financial gain as a reason people accept and adopt new ideas. He states, “An economic motivation is often assumed to be the main thrust for an individual's adoption of an innovation” (p. 115). Hence, parents who used to socialize girls and prepare them for marriage could see the importance and value of education and investing in girls' education.

CHAPTER 6

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN MALAWIAN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The study explored Parental Involvement at two private Secondary Schools. The four research questions of the study were:

1. In what ways are parents involved with their children at the school and at home?
2. What are the enablers and barriers to Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools?
3. What are the attitudes of educators towards Parental Involvement in Malawian private secondary schools?
4. How does the relationship between the school personnel and the parents define the parents' role in Malawian private secondary schools?

This chapter presents interrelated components that encapsulate the findings of this study: Cross-case Analysis (of the two bounded cases), Other Findings (not represented in the cross-case analysis), Implications for Practice (recommendations to the schools), Theoretical Implications, and Suggestions for Further Studies.

Cross-case Analysis

Cross-case analysis is a method for comparing findings of two or more cases. The

method explores similarities and differences across cases while identifying areas explained by the same themes (Eisenhardt, 1989; Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008; Yin, 2009). Cross-case analyses have implication for the development of theory, the purpose of which is to fill the gaps existing in literature, while suggesting areas in the theoretical framework that could be explored further. According to Merriam (2009) and Yin (2009), multiple case studies increase generalizability of the findings. Yin (2003) provided three types of multiple case studies: those that “predict similar results (literal replication) or predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (theoretical replication)” (p. 554), and “those used to determine the prevalence or frequency of a particular phenomenon” (p. 556). The original two cases were chosen in order to explore the ‘quintain’ (Stake, 2006), Parental Involvement in children’s education in private secondary schools without the expectations of what the findings would yield. The analysis of these schools produced within-case similarities but dissimilar across-case findings still; I identified four thematic clusters across cases that share patterns. These thematic clusters apparent across the cases included: Ideologies and Perspectives, Busy Parents, Significance of Parental Involvement to Educators and Families, and Adolescent Development and Psychosociological Issues.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the intention of multicase studies is for understanding the quintain instead of comparing the cases (Stake, 2006). Various researchers have proposed strategies for conducting cross-case analyses; however, the dissimilarity in findings compelled me to present the differences and similarities across the cases in order to portray the multidimensionality of Parental Involvement as represented in these schools. Eisenhardt (1989) describes the purpose of presenting similarities and

differences to understand the quintain. He states,

This tactic forces researchers to look for the subtle similarities and differences between cases. The juxtaposition of seemingly similar cases by a researcher looking for differences can break simplistic frames. In the same way, the search for similarity in a seemingly different pair also can lead to more sophisticated understanding. (Eisenhardt, 1989, pp. 540-541)

The combined findings would, therefore, lead to the conceptualization of the quintain as explanations are given for the differences and similarities.

The emergent themes from the two cases clearly show some cross-cutting themes. These themes respond and are aligned to the research questions. Consequently, the cross-case analyses are organized according to the research questions instead of emergent themes (see Figure 16).

Research Question 1

In what ways are parents involved with their students at the school and at home?

Parents' experiences at Kampango and Balala were vastly different. Participants in this study were involved with their children in different ways and at different levels. However, data revealed similarities in two areas: *Parents' financial investment into their children's education*, and *Academic socialization* as the most significant home-based involvement; and, disparate findings of School-based Involvement: *Visibility at school*.

Home-based Involvement

1. *Parents' financial investments into their children's education.* Parents overtly or subtly suggested that financing their children's education was a major contribution to children's education and felt that the schools were under obligations to ensure that children passed the national examinations. In fact, in Malawi secondary, even public education is not free (RIPPLE Africa, 2003-2016) and children cannot complete

Cross-Case Analysis

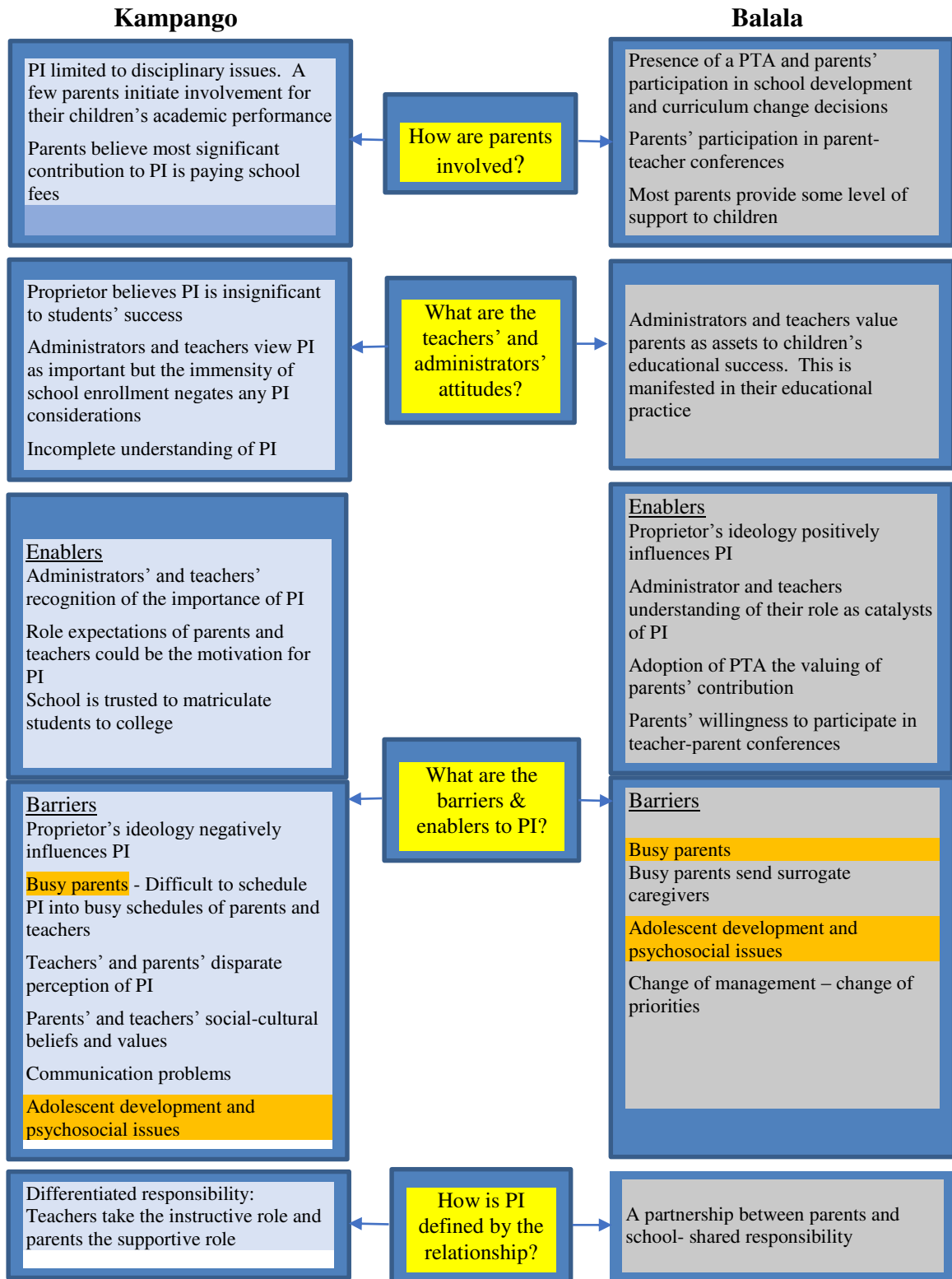


Figure 16. Cross-case Analysis.

secondary education without parents' financial investments in education. This study confirms findings from other studies conducted in Malawi which revealed the high cost of secondary education and how it affects family finances (Chimombo, 2005; Dizon-Ross, 2014; RIPPLE Africa, 2003-2016). These studies also showed that children are unable to complete their education due to poverty (Chimombo, 2005; RIPPLE Africa, 2003-2016). The issue of school fees in secondary school is unique to developing countries whose funding for their education systems is inadequate. This is especially true of private schools that are self-supporting.

2. *Academic socialization as the most significant home-based involvement.*

Although parents engaged in a gamut of Parental Involvement strategies such as monitoring and providing structure for studying, the data shows that academic socialization formed the basis of most home-based Parental Involvement. Families engaged in communicating their aspirations, setting expectations and giving encouragement to ensure their children would perform better in school. Even though some of the parents were semi-illiterate, their academic socialization made a difference in encouraging children to excel in school. This finding validates previous findings on the importance of academic conversation between parents and children (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Dufur et al., 2013; Grolnick et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2004; Trusty, 1999).

School-based Involvement

Kampango and Balala present contrasting results regarding school-based involvement. While Kampango parents hardly visited the school, Balala parents were present at most of the school organized student-related conferences and extra-curricular

activities. The difference is discussed below.

1. Kampango Families' School Involvement

The findings indicated a lack of parents' visibility at Kampango. School-based involvement was mostly relegated to school-initiated invitations to discuss disciplinary issues with parents. Only a few parents initiated contact with the school for their children's academic achievement. As revealed in the data, there are three main reasons for lack of parents' involvement at the school: a) the intentional decision of proprietors to isolate parents from the school and the subsequent absence of school policies, b) educator's attitude toward parents' involvement which resulted in an unwelcome environment for Parental Involvement, and c) parents' own social contexts (cultural values, time constraints, and lack of self-efficacy for interacting with teachers).

These findings are consistent with previous literature (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Marphatia et al., 2010; Murray et al., 2014; Patrikakou, 2008; Swap, 1993; Walker et al., 2005). Specifically, the present findings can be compared to and fit two extant models: a) Swap's (1993) Protective Model aimed at isolating parents from school with the resultant lack of school structures for Parental Involvement; and, b) Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model which identifies three factors influencing parents' involvement. The factors include, parents' perceptions of invitations to get involved (invitations from the school, educators and children); parents' motivators (their role construction and self-efficacy); and their life contexts.

2. Balala Parent's School Involvement

Unlike Kampango, Balala presents a different paradigm. Although there was a

subtle mutual understanding that this was a private school, parents were willing to get involved in the school. Families had substantively contributed to the life of the school through parent-teacher conferences and the PTA. Because of the school's welcoming environment, parents visited the school at their own initiation and by invitation from the school for both children's academic and extracurricular performances. Of note is the invitation at the end of each school term for parents to discuss their children's academic performance with educators. In addition, parents advocated for curriculum changes and contributed to the development of infrastructure at the school. These findings support the school-family partnership models that delineate types of Parental Involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 2001; Minke, Sheridan, Kim, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014; Swap; 1993). The communication channel and programs established by the school were the factors that improved the school-family relationships.

Research Question 2

What are the attitudes of the educators towards Parental Involvement?

Educators in both schools perceived that Parental Involvement in children's education is important and believed that parents should make a difference in the education of their children. Teachers from both schools believed that parents needed to ensure that their children were well behaved. Nevertheless, there are important differences in their rationale for wanting the involvement of parents in children's education.

The Kampango educators viewed parents through deficit ideological lenses (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Roper, 2008; Swap 1993). They purported that parents had secondary responsibility in their children's education. Families' role was supportive,

mainly to keep children obedient. While previous studies associated, deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997) to parents' poor environment for fostering educational outcomes, Kampango teachers blamed parents for shirking their responsibility by dumping their delinquent children at the school, expecting the school to perform academic success miracles. In addition, the deficit perspective was manifested in educators' devaluation of parents' efforts to assist their children. In the focus group session, there was constant referral to put children in the dormitory if parents wanted their children to pass, implying that parents had limited skills for parenting their children.

Balala educators on the other hand valued parents' involvement in both disciplinary and academic issues. While understanding that teachers' main duty is to teach the curriculum, they valued parents as partners and appreciated their contribution in monitoring and encouraging their children to study in order to improve academic performance. Although educators expected parents to instill the value of education and principles of discipline at home, they also believed educators had a part to play in the behavioral development of children. The educators' open door policy that allowed parents to discuss their concerns about their children's performance and the planned end-of-the-term teacher-parent conferences facilitated valuable relationship building processes. These findings validate extant findings that show educators' positive attitudes and the sharing of values are conducive to the development of parents' trust of the school and its educators, as well as parents' increase in self-efficacy for involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2001; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Minke et al., 2014).

Research Question 3

What are the barriers and enablers to Parental Involvement?

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Findings showed several barriers to Parental Involvement. One commonality between the two schools was parents' busy schedules.

1. *Busy Schedules.* All participants agreed that working parents lacked time for involvement. Families considered time in their employment more important for children's education (money for tuition) than responding to schools' requests for their presence. Instead of their visibility at school, Kampango parents sent siblings to respond to calls from school regarding their student. The Balala parents, on the other hand, sent house workers or other relatives to meet with educators to collect school reports and discuss students' performance. Time constraints have been indicated in other studies as a barrier to Parental Involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sander, 1995; Patrikakou, 2008; Swap, 1993).

2. *Child Development Issues.* Psychosocial issues that adolescents faced during their development were another area of similarity. Families and educators discussed the difficulties parents faced in monitoring their adolescents, specifically, adolescents' quest for autonomy, negative peer influences and their misunderstanding of the value of education. These findings are universal to adolescent development, adolescents' behaviors and the conflict with parents in seeking autonomy (Brown & Klute, 2003; Smetana et al., 2006; Tilton-Weaver & Marshall, 2008). However, cultural norms complicate the relationships between parents and their adolescents. Sometimes parents find it easier to defer such conflicts to relative for solutions.

Barriers at Kampango

Barriers to Parental Involvement at Kampango are divided into institutional factors and parental factors. Institutional factors comprised of the proprietor's negative ideology to Parental Involvement, educators' beliefs and attitudes toward parents, and parents' social contexts.

1. *Institutional factors.* There are several institutional barriers revealed in the data emanating from proprietors' ideology and educators' attitudes. The most salient barrier was the proprietors' ideologies and their influence on educators' attitudes concerning Parental Involvement at the school. This is a finding that is unique to this study. Although previous findings reveal principals' and teachers' attitudes toward Parental Involvement (Coyote, 2009; Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010; Patrikakou, 2008; Thornburg, 1981) and school districts' role in promoting Family Involvement (Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss, 2009), these studies do not address the influence of proprietors' ideologies. As revealed in this study, proprietors of private schools have decision-making autonomy and control over all school operations, unlike, public or parochial schools that are controlled by boards of governors.

Kampango proprietors believed in isolating parents. They perceived that Parent Involvement had no effect on children's academic performance and devalued their contributions. Therefore, school policies for Parental Involvement were non-existent. As a result, Kampango educators and parents had conflicting perspectives and disparate understandings of Parental Involvement including parents' roles in children's education. Educators held the belief that parents' involvement is home-based, while parents expected educators to be involved in shaping the children's characters and providing

academic instruction. Previous literature suggests that tension arises between educators and parents when schools lack Parental Involvement policies (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Boyd, 2005; Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Ramirez, 1999). However, Kampango misunderstanding of Parental Involvement was further exacerbated not only by the policies and educator's attitudes but also by lack of teachers' Parental Involvement training.

Due to the proprietors' goal of school expansion, opportunity for school and family relationships were thwarted. In addition, it was impossible to schedule for parent-teacher conferences because of the large class size. Consequently, teacher invitations to parents were infrequent and parents felt unwelcome at the school. Previous studies have mentioned the difficulties of scheduling Parental Involvement in large schools (Ouimette, Feldman, & Tung, 2004; Thornburg, 1981) and educators' attitudes towards involvement of parents in the school (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010; Murray et al., 2014; Peña, 2000; Ramirez, 1999; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010).

Communication challenges were another consequence to the large school student body. Communication to parents focused on two issues: tuition-payment reminders, and summons to discuss children's delinquency. Families decried the lack of grade reports that apparently were communicated to parents through the children who often failed to deliver the documents. These findings confirm what other studies have revealed that communication between schools and parents is a major barrier to Parental Involvement (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Graham-Clay, 2005; Holt, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Kraft & Rogers, 2014 Metlife, 2012; Patrikakou, 2008).

2. *Parents' Social Contexts.* The level of parents' participation in children's

education is contingent on parents' social context, such as level of education, socioeconomic status and socio-cultural values and beliefs. The type of parent employment determined whether there was time to academically socialize with their children. Consistent with previous studies, Parental Involvement at home is often hampered by a variety of parents' characteristics (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Patrikakou, 2008). Included in these parents' contexts are the traditional beliefs regarding the futility of supporting female children, orphans, or social orphans (Bisika et al., 2009; Hyde & Kadzamira, 1994b; Samati, 2013). While believing thus, parents still enrolled girls and orphans in schools in response to the country's promotion of girls' education (Chirwa, 2002; Shimamura, 2016; Smiley, 2011).

Another belief discussed above concerns responsibility for academic success. Parents believe teachers are responsible for children's academic success and therefore they believe their financial investment suffices which reduces the level of their home involvement. This is a finding that is consistent with Peña's (2000) study conducted among Mexican Americans.

Barriers at Balala

A barrier unique to Balala that affected the implementation of Parental Involvement was the change of management. At the onset of the study in 2006, parents and the school had a workable relationship. The proprietor and headmaster at that time concentrated on building the relationship with parents. When the proprietor lessened her involvement at the school and delegated her responsibilities to the new director who was the previous headmaster, collaboration between the parents and educators decreased. The new headmaster focused more on parent-teacher conferences and less on Parental

Involvement in the PTA. Educators interviewed in 2011 affirmed that they were no longer participating in the PTA. This finding points to the importance of communicating policies and strategies and training of all schooling agent to ensure they share the school's vision of partnership. Commitment to common purpose is only achieved if all participants understand how to implement the vision (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2000).

Enablers

Educators and parents in both schools recognized the importance of Parental Involvement and perceived that Parental Involvement was beneficial for day scholars. Parental Involvement had potential for improving academic performance, curbing misbehavior, and curtailing truancy especially for of day scholars who did not have the same restrictions and resources as their peers in boarding facilities. This finding supports conclusions from several studies on advantages of Parental Involvement (Kreider et al., 2007; Mugabe & Maposa, 2013). For example, The Harvard Family Research Project synthesis of Parental Involvement in middle and high school concluded that parents have the responsibility for providing educational expectations. In addition, the authors highlight the significance of parents' responsibility, thus: "Parenting that promotes supportive parent-youth relationships and is characterized by a high level of child monitoring is related to positive adolescent outcomes including social competence and good grades" (Kreider, et al., 2007, p. 9). A conclusion of a survey of 150 Zimbabwean teachers also showed that Parental Involvement was one of the strategies for curbing learner misconduct in Zimbabwean secondary schools (Mugabe & Maposa, 2013). Similarities do exist between the current findings and extant findings in literature.

Educators and parents in this study appreciated the concept of partnership and the

importance of working together for the sake of improving students' educational outcomes. Educators discussed ways they could encourage parents to get involved with their children. At the fore is educators' recognition that Parental Involvement is significant even if it means involving parents for disciplinary reasons. In addition, educators' and parents' role expectations could be the background motivation for building a relationship. It was obvious from this very first meeting between parents and Kampango educators and administrators that parents were eager to establish some type of relationship with the school. The need for collaboration between educators and parents is not unique to Malawi. The plethora of literature available on partnership indicates the struggle schools have in forming partnerships with parents (Bull et al., 2008; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 2001; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Kraft & Rogers, 2014).

Families in both educational institutions trusted the schools to matriculate their children into college although the percentage of children passing the national examination was miniscule compared to the intakes. In addition, parents were eager to learn from educators how they could assist their children. Although these were private educational institutions, parents inquired how they could cooperate with the school for their children's sake. The fact that Kampango parents of day scholars had many questions during the focus group sessions, and Balala parents asked teachers for strategies they could use in assisting their children is indicative of critical dialogue required between the parties for acquiring social capital that would benefit their children. The importance of providing parents with strategies for assisting their children, and the need for improvement of communication between the school and the home is well documented (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 2001; Kraft & Rogers, 2014).

The data does show that Balala had already established itself as a parent-friendly school. The Balala proprietor believed in the inclusion of parents in the education of their children. The proprietor's ideology was manifested in the school policy and practices resulting in explicit parent encouragement to get involved both at school and at home. The administrators and educators following the proprietor's mandates provided a welcoming environment for parents to participate in their children's education. In addition, educators understood that they were catalysts for Parental Involvement.

The establishment of a PTA and the welcoming atmosphere at the school during parent-teacher conferences portrayed the value the school placed on parents' contribution. Furthermore, parents' willingness to formulate a PTA and their constant participation in parent-teacher conferences was a motivator to other parents to get involved. Although some parents were dissatisfied with the level of Parental Involvement at the school, such communication could facilitate more dialogue between the two groups resulting in better relationship. Communication from educators helps parents to understand how they can best help their children and opens up networks (social capital) for increasing the child's opportunity to succeed. Balala's Parental Involvement has some elements similar to Epstein's (2001) and Swap's (1993) models, which are discussed in Chapter 7.

Research Question 4

How does the relationship between the school and the parents define the parents' role?

The two schools differ significantly in their definition of Parental Involvement. Kampango on one hand believed in intentionally preventing parents from actively

supporting the academic endeavors. The school had power to “maintain its social hierarchy” (Navarro, 2006, p. 14). The school disregarded parents’ contributions and failed to communicate essential information that would educate parents on how to assist their children. Kampango educators and administrators believed parents should only offer home-based support. Therefore, there was no relationship between parents and educators.

On the contrary, Balala valued parents’ contribution to the school. The educators believed in shared responsibility, allowing parents to participate in the education of their children in a variety of ways. Policies of the school guide educators and administrators in developing a school ethos that is conducive to a welcoming environment for parents. Hence, parents contributed and participated in the physical development of the school, assisted in curriculum decisions, and worked with educators to improve students’ academic performance with guidance from educators. Epstein (2001) and Swap (1993) have provided models of Parental Involvement similar to Parental Involvement models at Kampango and Balala. The proprietorship element of private schools renders variable and contextual differences to the models described by Epstein and Swap (discussed later in Chapter 7).

Summary of Key Findings From Case Studies Organized According to Bronfenbrenner’s’ Bioecological Model

The following section sums up the study findings and includes substantive themes which indirectly correspond to the research questions. These key findings are organized according to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Bioecological Model as follows: Process (the interaction between the child and his environment), Person (characteristics that affect the child, such as age, gender, beliefs, attitudes, expectations), Contexts which consists of

Microsystems (a child's immediate environments), Mesosystem (the interface between the child's Microsystems), Exosystem (factors that indirectly influence a child's development such as educational policies, parents' workplace policies), Macrosystem (overarching guiding factors such as socioeconomic status, worldviews, values) and Chronosystem (the concept of passage of time)

The study revealed multidimensional factors (school practices and parents' contextual characteristics) that positively or negatively affected the involvement of parents in the schools. These findings validate Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), an Ecological Systems theory that delineates environments and factors that influence human development. These findings also corroborate findings by Patrikakou's (2008) and Hoover-Dempsey et al.'s (2005) concerning factors that impact parents' decisions to get involved in their children's education. These factors, as indicated in this study include: school environments, teachers and parents' perspectives and attitudes toward Parental Involvement, children's characteristics and development, the parent's own cultural perspectives, life and social contexts such as level of education, time constraints, and lack of self-efficacy (knowledge of what is expected of them and strategies for helping their children at home). These factors are universal and were manifested in this study at different levels of Parental Involvement.

Process

From an ecological system perspective, proximal processes, interaction between children and their parents and between parents and teachers, had to occur frequently and progressively in order to effectively influence the child's development. In this study,

proximal processes occurred in two microsystems: school-based interactions between teachers and students and home-based Parental Involvement—the interactions between parents and children.

It is worth mentioning that relationships matter in improving students' academic outcomes. Literature reveals the importance of teacher-student relationships and parents' support of their children in improving academic outcomes. It is a given that apart from teachers' expertise, students' academic engagement and social development is a result of caring, supportive teacher-student relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Klem & Connell, 2004; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). In addition, it is a given that home-based academic related interactions between parents and students in terms of parents' aspirations for their children's education and expectations, instill the value of education in children (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).

Interaction in the family between children and their biological parents is expected to be natural phenomenon because normal human beings are innately positioned to love their children. This unfortunately is not the same for orphans and social orphans. The data shows that orphans and social orphans were neglected or inadequately supported by parents because of the wards' poor behaviors and attitudes. Extant literature has shown that orphans and social orphans have poor academic outcomes due to the deficient care they receive (McBride, 2001, 2004; Shimamura, 2016; Smiley, 2011; Terway et al., 2012).

Personal Characteristics

Bronfenbrenner (1979) delineated several characteristics influencing the development of the child such as age, gender, race, beliefs, attitudes and expectations.

This study revealed three factors including: a) Supporting orphans and social orphans, b) The impact of gender issues and c) Expectations.

Supporting Orphans and Social Orphans

The data revealed that many participants were either parents of, or knew parents that cared for, orphans or social orphans. The structure of the educational system in Malawi and its challenges compel parents to seek better educational prospects for their children. Therefore, they sent their children to live with extended family in the cities. In addition, Malawi has half a million orphans who are taken care of by extended family. The cultures in Malawi are built around patrilineal or matrilineal systems, which expect the nuclear family to care for its children. However, in the case of deaths the extended family is obliged to take up the responsibility thus, providing support, and protection to the orphans (Chirwa, 2002). With this premise, it was necessary to include family involvement within the definition of Parental Involvement.

Impact of Gender

A significant but not surprising finding at Kampango was teachers' and parents' attitudes toward girls. The focus groups discussion revealed that many parents favored the education of boys. Some parents believed boys education had financial returns. In spite of their trepidation that girls would get married or pregnant, parents still put their girls in school. Their concerns are not far-fetched when dropout rates due to pregnancy or marriage (18%) are considered. A 2014 study, conducted in Malawi by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability, and Social Welfare (MoGCDW), sustains the validity of parent's concerns. The findings in this study show that one out of five females aged 13 to

17 experienced sexual violence at the hands of friends, boyfriends or classmates often in the afternoon either on the road or at school. In addition, teachers revealed their own bias against girls' education. The prevalent stereotyping of girls from parents and teachers shows the uphill battle girls face at home and at school in order to obtain an education. These findings support gender equality studies conducted in Malawi which have over the years pointed to the plight of girls in education (Bisika et al., 2009; Chafetz, 2006; Samati, 2013; Shoola, 2013, Westberg, 2010).

Expectations

Kampango Educators and parents had disparate expectations and understanding of their roles. The parents who adhered to traditional epistemologies and were accustomed to traditional school Parental Involvement practices expected the school to take full responsibility for children's academic success. They trusted the schools to deliver on their promises to matriculate their children into the few colleges in Malawi. Consequently, Malawian parents are not involved at the school except for behavioral issues (Marphatia et al., 2010).

Teachers who adhered to traditional epistemologies viewed parents with a deficit thinking ideology that parents were uninterested in their children's education. They expected parents to prioritize monitoring of their children's behavior over supervising children's academic efforts (Swap 1993).

Mesosystem

The interface and the relationships developed between the two systems (school and parents) depended on the proprietors' visions of their schools. As indicated above,

the study revealed differences in the type of relationships between parents and educators developed at each school.

The positive attitude exhibited between educators and parents at Balala was a result of the proprietor's vision and the purposeful planning to include parents in their children's education. The open communication lines instituted by the school and manifested through the PTAs, open-door policies, parent-teacher conferences and newsletters provided parents a welcoming atmosphere and a sense of belonging. The partnership resulted in intergenerational closure in which parents and educators shared their mutual goals to work together for the academic success of their children. Consequently, through the collaboration, infrastructure improvements, curriculum changes and other educational projects were undertaken, and parents were empowered to assist their children. Balala's experience portrays the benefits of school-family relationships and supports Eziuzo and Enueme (2013) and Ugwulashi's (2012) findings that delineated the value of a PTAs and collaboration between the school and the home.

On the other hand, Kampango provides a negative example of schools that choose to isolate parents from getting involved in the children's education (Swap, 1993). Families had little knowledge of the school and felt unwelcomed at the school. Communication was one of the major problems at the school resulting from the educator's deficit thinking regarding parents in addition to the disparate understanding of Parental Involvement and parents' role in children's education. In addition, parents were reluctant to assist the school in improving its infrastructure. Although parents may have wanted to collaborate with the school, they understood that Kampango was a private school that was providing much needed educational services to the society. Therefore, it

was not worth disputing with the owners when they mandated policies that were not in the favor of parents (Ugwulashi, 2012).

It is important to note that while proprietors have the upper hand in establishing the relationship between parents and the educators, these interactions depend on several elements: communication and the discussion of expectations each group has of the other; strategic planning; availability of resources; willingness and commitment of educators to set up an appropriate environment for Parental Involvement; creating time to implement the strategies; and the willingness of parents to accept the strategies and collaborate with the school (Patrikakou, 2008, Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). However, communication is the key to successful relationships between educators and teachers. In sharing values and expectations educators and parents can have a shared vision resulting in a collaboration that positively influences student educational outcomes (Senge et al., 2000, 2012; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).

Exosystem

Exosystem is an environment which the child does not directly interact with but which greatly influences a child's development. This includes educational system and school policies, and parents' work policies. In this study, policies and lack of policies for Parental Involvement affected the relationship between parents and educators.

Parental Involvement could have been more effective if the institutions had made efforts in developing comprehensive policies and procedures for involving parents. The lack of Parental Involvement and two-way communication policies at Kampango resulted in misunderstanding between parents and educators. Kampango needed to develop and communicate its policies, and spell out its values and goals to provide a welcoming

atmosphere even if they did not have intentions to involve parents at the school.

Balala educators intentionally created an environment of inclusion through its policies such as the parent-teacher conferences, and PTAs. The PTA was an avenue for building social networks and improving the relationships between parents and between parents and educators. Literature indicates the importance of school Parental Involvement policies and practices for strong partnership between the school and the parents (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2001; Patrikakou, 2008).

Macrosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), macrosystem are overarching guiding principles that affect the functions of society and impact the microsystems in which a child develops, such as ideologies, politics, education goals, societal attitudes and cultural belief systems. Three macrosystem factors that emerged in this study included: a) the role of ideology, b) cultural beliefs about children, and c) the impact of parents' social contexts.

Role of Ideology

Parental Involvement in these private schools was mostly influenced by the proprietors' ideology. While the proprietor of Kampango chose to alienate parents, Balala's proprietor chose to form an alliance with parents and welcomed their participation in academics and school development. Although the influence of private school proprietors on Parental Involvement has not been studied, previous studies have shown the influence of educators' perspective on the type of school Parental Involvement model. These influences include teacher's beliefs and efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey et al.,

1987), deficit perspective of low-income families (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007) and principals' hegemonic influence on the definition of Parental Involvement (Smith, 2009).

Cultural Beliefs About Children

Cultural beliefs about girls influences the way parents and teachers support girls' education. Families and teachers believe girls are less intelligent than boys and are not worth investing hard earned money on as financial investment in girls has little academic returns (most girls will not pass). This belief is a self-perpetuating because parents act on what they believe in without proper information. There is evidence that girls do poorly in the Malawi secondary schools (Mbilizi, 2008); however, this is because of obstacles apparent at several of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems. There are many girls who when academically supported achieve academic success. As evidenced in this study some teachers perpetuate this cultural belief.

Impact of Parents' Social Context

Support for children may have been lacking in some families because of two factors: a) Social economic status of parents influenced their involvement. Guardians defined Parental Involvement in terms of their financial support in keeping children in school, and b) Parents who lacked self-efficacy due to their level of education provided poor academic assistance for children. They perceived the curriculum to be above their skills and believed that teachers had the responsibility of ensuring that children pass (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Patrikakou, 2008).

Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner revised his human ecological system in 2005 and included the

concept of time. This concept encompasses the changes that occur with the passage of time. In this study four factors emerged under Chronosystem: a) Children's psychological development impacted how parents interacted with their children. Families and educators decried student attitudes towards parents, teachers and study ethics. Literature indicates adolescence is a crisis-laden period when children are seeking autonomy and may not conform to parents' rules (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). b) The data revealed time constraints regarding both home-based involvement and school-based involvement in their children's education. Parents work schedules were restrictive (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). It is important to note that parents' efforts to earn a living in order to keep children in school were in direct conflict with their intentions to get involved in providing academic support. c) Over time, the Balala PTA evolved from a very vibrant PTA to an inactive PTA. Teachers indicated that the waning of the PTA's influence was due to change of management and the lack of commitment to maintaining PTA's services.

To ensure continuity of programs, Senge et al. (2000, 2012) suggests professional development for employees and the sharing of vision to ensure that those working in an organization understand the organizational systems and policies. d) Cultural beliefs regarding girls' education have been changing over time. Guardians were embracing the country's initiatives regarding girls' education. The data revealed that between 2006 and 2011 there was an increase in the enrollment of girls in the two institutions. The data also revealed that over the passage of time, some parents were changing their beliefs regarding girls' education and were willing to invest in their girls.

Parental Involvement Policies

The discussion of Parental Involvement is not complete without discussing

government partnership policies that influence decision making on community participation in schools. Findings from this study have implications for Parental Involvement policies specifically regarding communities' role in the implementation of education and gender policies. The following section will discuss in general terms the origin of Parental Involvement policies in the Sub-Saharan region, and in specific terms, the implementation of Parental Involvement policies in Malawi.

Parental Participation Policies in the Sub-Saharan Region

Parents in Sub-Saharan countries have a long history of supporting the government in improving the educational systems. During the colonial era and after decolonization, some Sub-Saharan countries encouraged communities to engage in self-help schemes that supplemented government efforts in improving children's access to both primary and secondary education as exemplified in the Kenyan Harambee Secondary School Movement (Mwiria, 1990; Onsomu, Mungai, Oulai, Sankale, & Mujidi, 2004) and the Malawi DEC's (African Development Fund, 2001; Laymaman, 1999).

Since the introduction of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, education has been perceived as the catalyst for reducing poverty (Education for All, 2009; World Bank, 2009). Therefore, in response to the problems of underdevelopment, governments have made major policy changes and focused on policies and strategies that improve the education systems to accelerate progress. However, each government has had to define their own objectives and develop policies and strategies consistent with national priorities and budgets. Epstein (2005) affirms that "emerging policies are still responses to poverty and demographics, family demands, and

goals for equity and excellence in students' education" (Epstein, 2005, p. 39).

Millennium Development Goal 2: UPE

The Sub-Saharan countries have successfully implementing this MDG even though the region has not fully achieved UPE. Except for eight countries, the Sub-Saharan countries have reached above 80% enrollment, which is 20% more than the net enrollment in 2000 (Africa Renewal, 2010; İşcan, Rosenblum & Tinker, 2015; Africa-America Institute, 2015; United Nations, 2015). The success is attributed to the elimination of primary school fees so as to increase primary school net enrollment in several Sub-Sahara African countries such as Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (UNICEF, 2015b; World Bank/UNICEF, 2009). However, the successful implementation of UPE exacerbated the deficiencies of the secondary school systems, and adversely affected education quality. Countries are confronted with large class sizes with insufficient classroom space, inadequate teaching and learning resources, fewer qualified teachers and high student-teacher ratio resulting in poor learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2014). Furthermore, gender issues in the education system became more apparent (UNESCO, 2009, 2015 Education for All, 2009; World Bank, 2010).

Various governments decentralized the education systems and incorporated private sector participation in education to improve the educational services (Onsomu et al., 2004; United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2008). Participation policies introduced following the adoption of the MDGs focused on the functional aspect of cost-sharing, which included parents' financial investments that fund in part the cost of private and public primary and secondary schools such as school parents' contributions in building

classrooms and providing learning resources (African Development Fund, 2001; Marphartia et al., 2010; World Bank, 2010). Most of these governments have turned to developing partnerships with communities and the civil society.

Parental Participation Policies in Malawi

In Malawi, this cost sharing included secondary school fees paid by students (Hall & Mambo, 2015). As spelt out in the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management (MoEST, 2004), parents and parent representatives participated in PTA and school management committees (SMC) to fundraise, monitor the disbursement of school funds, and to construct or rehabilitate physical school infrastructures. By the year 2000 parents had contributed and assisted in the building of more than of 75% of Malawi's primary schools (MoEST, 2000). The participation policies included more than requiring the construction of buildings (MoEST, 2004). The MoEST (2000) policy framework statement clarifies some of the functions of the school committees.

At a local level, the school and community should define not only inputs, but also the processes and relationships that support quality education and learning. At the local level the school management committee, the community members, and the school staff and pupils should develop a plan to attain the minimum quality standards, and to exceed these minimums if they are able. (p. 50)

Apart from encouraging community decision-making at the local level, the government encourages the participation of key partners in the development of guidelines for PTAs and SMC. It also promotes the participation-enabling programs implemented by NGOs. For example, Link Community Development Malawi in partnership with Response to Intervention (RTI) and the Dedza District Education Office have been implementing the "Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity" program since

2015. Some of the project's objectives are to develop parents' appreciation of the importance of helping their children to learn.

Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment

The target for this goal was to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education. The United Nations (2015) report an increase in girls' enrollment from 48% to 77% in 2015 in the Sub-Saharan region. However, the Sub-Saharan region lags behind because of financial and gender-related issues such as cultural beliefs and values. A few countries such as Botswana, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Swaziland, have achieved gender parity at primary and secondary schools (World Economic Forum, 2015). The overall success in improving gender parity in the region is attributed to changes in governmental policies and the availability of funding from international donors such as UNICEF, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID, 2006, 2010) among others (Pendleton, Mellish, & Sapuwa, 2016; UNICEF, 2015a; USAID, 2012). These donors have provided a variety of programs to raise the awareness of gender parity in schools and to keep girls in school. Notwithstanding the progress at the primary school level, Sub-Saharan countries still have an uphill battle to improve girls' education at the secondary school level (United Nations, 2015).

Malawi, one of the few countries to reach gender parity at the primary school level (102 girls to 100 boys) (UNESCO, 2015) still has challenges in improving girls' in secondary schools. The challenges to gender equality become apparent by Standard 8 when girls' enrollment drops to 46% (MoEST & EMIS, 2015). Girls' transition rate to

secondary school is 18% lower than that of boys. Statistics show lower levels of girls' enrollment from age 14 (Bakilana, Moucheraud, McConnell, & Hasan, 2016; Education Policy & Data Center, 2014; MoEST & EMIS, 2015). This decline is attributed to financial constraints (28%), pregnancies (28%) and marriage (16%) (Education Policy & Data Center, 2014; *Nyasa Times*, 2015).

Over the years, the Government of Malawi introduced policies to help keep girls in secondary school. Some of these policies directly affected the students such as the integration of pregnancy intervention and life skills into the curriculum (Birungi et al, 2015); the readmission after pregnancy (the re-entry) policy introduced in 1993 and revised in 2006; and scholarship programs funded by UNICEF channeled through various NGOs such as, Catapult, Kids in Need of Desks (KIND), and RIPPLE Africa.

Community Engagement in Education Related to Gender Issues

Community awareness of the problems young people face and their participation in changing children's attitudes and removal of barriers to girls' education is of paramount importance. To this end, the government in partnership with international NGOs and donors has implemented training programs, sensitization and information programs for communities, teachers and students. Some of the programs implemented by organizations such as, UNICEF, World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, Tearfund, Save the Children, and the DFID are geared to changing behaviors, cultural attitudes, and practices and developing skills of students, parents, and teachers. Included in these programs is the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR Dream) which has community-led efforts for ensuring girls are in school (Birungi et al., 2015; FHI360, 2017; Mita, 2016; UNDP, 2016). The

government has partnered with some local NGOs such as the Association of Christian Educators in Malawi (ACEM) and Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) to disseminate information and train administrators and community regarding community participation in schools.

Despite these efforts on girls' education, girls continue to drop out of school because of pregnancies and marriage occurring at a young age (*Nyasa Times*, 2015; Samati, 2013). Parents want their girls to get educated but the culture that encourages marriage with the rampant sexual harassment that results (Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability, & Social Welfare [MoGCDW], 2014), and young people's own poor sexual habits, work against the girls obtaining an education. Though the government has focused on disseminating information, cultural beliefs, values, and practices are hard to change. Exacerbating girls' plight is the lack of role models in schools, as 78% of secondary school teachers are men (EMIS, 2015). The situation is worse in private secondary schools where the preference for teachers is for men who have less family-related work absenteeism (Kampango Headmaster Limba).

Parental Involvement Policy Challenges

The implementation of parent engagement policies in private schools has challenges at the government level, school level and community level. While Malawi Government policies for Parental Involvement in education apply to both primary and secondary schools, implementation is primarily focused on primary schools and CDSS where parents have ownership due to their financial and in-kind contributions. The government has little authority on the management of private schools except for mandating that the schools follow government education standards and curricula. In

addition, the government has neither strict regulations for mandating the adherence to government policies nor the capacity (financial or human resource) to supervise private schools. The ISAMA, an NGO with mandates to monitor government educational policies and standards in private schools (ISAMA, 2016), can only suggest the need for Parental Involvement as a strategy for improving quality of education.

As indicated above, the 2004 policy includes collaboration with key stakeholders in developing guidelines. In addition, the Malawi 2008-2017 National Education Sector Plan (MoEST, 2008) includes plans for improving the PTAs and management boards. These revisions however, can only be successful if the parents' voices are included at the policy development phase, as well as disseminating information about the policies to all participants (Chimombo & Kadzamira, 2001; Sufyan, 2014). Findings from a study conducted in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda show that parents have limited knowledge about policies and the "roles and responsibilities that the policies formally ascribe to them with respect to school-level engagement and governance issues" (Marphatia et al., 2010, p. 19). Many committee members have no skills in implementing these policies. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) suggest that many parents do not participate because they lack the self-efficacy for involvement. Many PTA and SMC members including teachers and principals require training to be able to implement the policies.

Government Partnership With NGOs

The government has partnered with both international NGOs such as UNICEF, USAID and local NGOs such as ACEM (2011), the CRECCOM among others, to disseminate information to communities about community participation in schools

(Birungi et al., 2015). Evidence-based programs such as the Literacy Boost (Tiwerenge ndi Ana Athu) implemented by Save the Children have successfully increased children's reading skills at the primary school level. Some of the strategies in these programs included mobilizing parents to support children's literacy and training of teachers and parents (Save the Children, 2015). However, most of these programs concentrate on primary education. In addition, NGOs tend to choose districts and locations for their projects while leaving some areas unserved. Besides, most private secondary school communities are not served by NGOs because decisions to engage NGOs for training school communities' rests on proprietors. Parents in these schools have no power to influence the implementation of such school endeavors. Furthermore, while the inclusion of community involvement school policies is a noble idea, its implementation in private schools depends on government's leverage in negotiating with proprietors or mandating Parental Involvement in all schools.

The implementation of policies depends on budgets. With limited finances, the government efforts have focused on specific aspects of community participation in schools that are easier to implement such as the PTAs and SMC. Although the policies include promoting parents' role in encouraging better academic outcomes, very few parents have the time, skills or strategies for this role (Marphatia et al., 2010). In addition, few NGOs focus on parents' participation in their children's academics.

Theoretical Implications for This Study

Due to the intertwined, multifaceted variables and social factors of Parental Involvement in the schools, the findings support social theories espoused by Bronfenbrenner (1979), Epstein (2001), Hoover-Dempsey and Sanders (2005), Bourdieu

(1985), Putnam (2001), and Coleman (1988). Findings supported Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (1995, 2005) which highlights the roles of significant individuals in children's lives and the social interaction over time that impact children's development. Epstein's (2001) on the other hand suggests that schools have the responsibility for initiating Parental Involvement and providing school environment conducive for a collaboration between parents and educators. There are also some connections between Hoover-Dempsey and Sanders (2005) concepts concerning parents' role construction as parents make decisions to get involved in their children's education. Findings in this study show that parents' construction of Parental Involvement at both schools was a result of an amalgamation of influential factors including their perception of invitation from educators and from their own children, the schools' Parental Involvement models and their own parents' social contexts.

An understanding of Bourdieu's (1986) social theories was also critical for interpreting parents and teachers' attitudes towards Parental Involvement. Bourdieu's reproduction theory provided a look into human interactions, and the interplay of power structures between those who possessed more cultural capital and those who had less in the education fields or in the home fields. The proprietor's ideologies were derived from their cultural capital, ethical foundations and their understanding of the role of the school in society. On the other hand, parents' support for children's education depended on their understanding of the value of education, with some parents providing a future of self-reliance for the child. Others supported children to create a safety net for their own old age—a type of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) where children are obligated to pay back the parents for the support they received for their education.

Furthermore, social capital concepts advanced by Bourdieu (1985), Putnam (1995) and Coleman (1988) were evident in this study. Bourdieu's (1985) social capital emphasizing hierarchy of power was manifested at Kampango with the proprietor autocratically making decisions and alienating parents. Putnam's (1995) concepts of bridging and bonding social capital were manifested differently at each school. Kampango had no mechanism for bridging or bonding relationships with parents. On the contrary, Balala put some strategies in place for bridging and bonding relationships with parents and teachers even though some of the mechanism may not have produced the outcomes the school wanted. Coleman's (1988) social capital concept of transgenerational gap was demonstrated at Balala through their communication system and as parents and educators worked together to achieve the goal of educating students.

CHAPTER 7

IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENTIATION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN MALAWIAN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This chapter discusses a theory of Parental Involvement in Malawi, and two disparate Parental Involvement models that fit the theory. Alienation and Alliance Models were identified through the cross-case analysis of two schools. In order to understand the theory, I will first present the components of the theory before defining each concept and delineating the multidimensionality of factors that influence each model. Situating the theory in literature will follow to provide some perspectives of extant Parental Involvement theories. The chapter concludes with a summary of the theoretical model.

The Role of Ideology in the Partnership Between the Educators and Parents

As indicated in Figure 1, the dominant theme to emerge from this study is the multidimensionality of factors affecting Parental Involvement. A cross-case analysis of data of the bounded cases portrayed a package of ideologies held by proprietors, educators and parents. These beliefs are the bedrock of the type of partnership that existed between parents and the schools. This multidimensional nature of Parental Involvement and the differential nature of findings dictated assessment of the ideological factors contributing to the types of partnerships between parents and the schools.

The results presented evidence of strongly contrasting ideologies held by each school. Individuals participating at each school entered the education field with their own ideologies from their own personal socio-cultural backgrounds impacted by each actor's philosophical worldview. These dominant cultural and social ideologies played a major role in influencing the implementation of educational Parental Involvement, as the following illustrates:

We decided that it was most important both to us and to the parents to develop these kids to pass and if possible send them to the university. So, that became our number one goal. In order to achieve that, we kicked aside everything else that does not directly address that goal and one of those were the parents themselves. The parents had to be kicked aside so we would focus on the kids and work with the kids. Kampango Proprietor, Mr. Dule

We have put some objective and some proactive actions in place to get the parents involved in the development of their children. Parents are there. I think parents feel that once the child goes to secondary school then that's the end of it. We have also found out that actually even at that level, that's when the children need their parents even more because at this time the children are easily influenced by whatever they see around them: TV or even peer pressure. So, that's when the child has to really be productive and the parents have to really guide them even more at this age. Balala Proprietor, Mrs. Dambo

Therefore, an overarching proposition that emerged as a theoretical model is entitled, "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" a theory that delineates sources of influence for Parental Involvement in Malawian secondary schools.

Components of the Theoretical Model

Figure 17 stipulates four major components of the Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi: Ideologies held by different schooling agents, Constructions of Parental Involvement by schooling agents, Parental Involvement Model adopted by schools, and Actions taken by each schooling agent. This theoretical

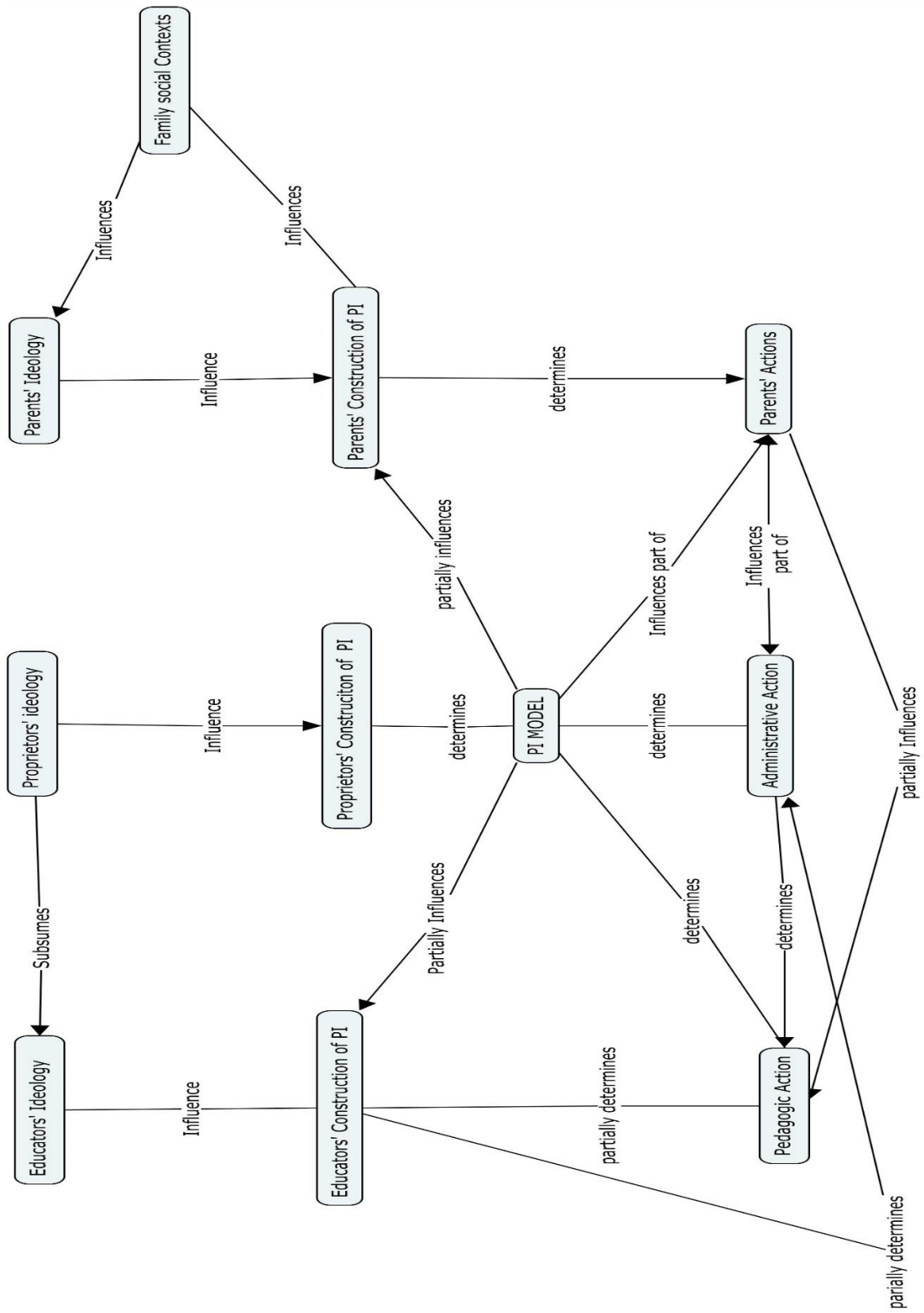


Figure 17. Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi.

model begins by focusing on the relationship between different actors' ideologies and school practices in engaging parents. Ideological influences result in the formation of perspectives and attitudinal dispositions, which in turn translate into school structures, policies, and practices (see Figure 17). The aggregate of these ideological factors culminates in the construction and conceptualization of Parental Involvement at each school and the Parental Involvement actions of schooling agents.

Ideologies

There are many definitions of ideology, but for the purpose of this study, I define ideology using Dijk's (1998) arguments, "Ideologies are just that: clusters of beliefs in our minds (which are) socially acquired, constructed" (p. 26). He continues to say these ideologies "influence what is accepted as true or false, especially when such beliefs are found to be relevant for the group. Ideologies may also form the basis of specific arguments for and explanations of, specific social arrangements, or indeed influence a specific understanding of the world in general" (p. 26). In essence, ideology is the aggregate of a person's experiences and perspectives that coalesce into the person's views and perceptions of life.

As indicated on Figure 17, the data provides three sources of ideologies: proprietors, educators, and parents. All schooling agents enter the field with their own ideologies originating from their own cultural capital including their worldview and status of power. By virtue of their position and status, the proprietors however, exert overall influence on the implementation of actions at the school and set trajectories within which all entities operate. The influence of the educators' ideologies is secondary to that of the proprietor and often educator's ideologies are subsumed by the proprietors'

objectives and goals. Families' ideologies play a role in participating in their children's education, both at home and school.

Construction of Parental Involvement

Each schooling agent conceptualizes Parental Involvement according to the set of ideologies they have and their experiences from within and without the school and home fields. The school Model plays a significant role in informing and shaping Parental Involvement at the school and influences how schooling agents view educational operations and determines parents' and educators' practices of Parental Involvement. In this theory, proprietors and educators' life context have been excluded because their construction of Parental Involvement is primarily influenced by the school contexts. However, social contexts are a significant factor in parents' construction of Parental Involvement and have been included in the Model.

Actions Taken by Schooling Agents

Actions in this theory are responses or measures taken in reaction to schooling agents' perspective of Parental Involvement. They are not just activities but go deeper to the level of behavior that influences the action of others. Actions either promote or hinder Parental Involvement. There are three types of actions: Administrative, Pedagogic, and Parent Actions. Administrative Actions were developed for the school's operations regarding Parental Involvement. These conventions were carried out by educators. Pedagogic Actions were actions teachers took in the classroom that affected student learning outcomes and sometimes affected parents' home-based involvement. Parents' Actions were influenced by the school Parental Involvement Model and parents' own

social and life contexts. These actions affected their involvement both at home and at school. Thus, a) the school set the environment for Parental Involvement through the Administrative Actions which influenced educators' understanding of and implementation of Parental Involvement. b) Educators carried out Pedagogic Actions - practices influenced by Administrative Actions, Parents' Actions and their own construction of Parental Involvement. c) Parents' Actions are influenced by three factors: their own construction of Parental Involvement, the School's Model of Parental Involvement, Administrative Action and Pedagogic Actions by teachers. These actions resulted in either positive or negative home-based or school-based Parental Involvement.

Parental Involvement Models

Two disparate models of Parental Involvement emerged from the cross-case analysis and theory development. Each school took a different approach to interfacing with parents: Kampango implemented the Alienation Model characterized by lack of policies and strategies which resulted in the isolation of parents. Balala enacted an Alliance Model manifested by its Parental Involvement policies, and collaboration with parents. The Parental Involvement models differ because of the proprietors' set of beliefs, priorities and their purposes for providing educational services. These two models help us see the theory as enacted in real life. While two specific models were identified in this study, this theory anticipates the identification of additional models and is flexible enough to accommodate them.

It is important to note that the diversity of participants in each school resulted in multidimensionality of ideologies. Therefore, I cannot generalize the types of ideologies to all participants in each category. For example, each school had some parents who

adhered to the Alienation Model and some parents to the Alliance Model. What I would like to emphasize is that the Alienation and Alliance Models are a result of the preponderance of the concepts from data across both research sites.

Alienation Model

The Alienation Model reflects parents' experience and the school's approach to Parental Involvement. As discussed in Chapter 3, Kampango "kicked aside the parents" to make way for educators to focus on improving examination pass rates. The use of the word Alienation in this study depicts parents' experience at the school and align with five of Seeman's (1959) meanings of Alienation namely: "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement" (p. 783). In keeping with Seeman's definitions, the word 'Alienation' denotes: a) the power exuded by the Kampango proprietors in contrast to parents' and educators' powerlessness to influence Parental Involvement at the school; b) meaninglessness caused by the lack of understanding of school policies, regulations and school agents' roles; c) the proprietors and educators disregard of norms which guided educational practices; d) parents' unquestioning acceptance of the school rules and regulations, e) parents' isolation from decision-making concerning the education of their children; and, f) parents' own distancing from the school because of their own feelings of self-estrangement to educational practices or because of their own social context. The Alienation Model portrays the ideological diversity held by the different agents of schooling and the subsequent Parental Involvement practices.

Kampango Proprietors' Ideologies

Two distinct ideologies were evident in the data which included: Deficit Ideology

(Only Educators Are Responsible for Academic Success) and Capitalistic Ideology (Using School as a Business Venture).

Deficit Thinking (Only Educators Are Responsible for Academic Success)

Educators' deficit ideology was their belief that parents cannot contribute to children's education because of their deficient backgrounds (for example, lack of academic skills and time for assisting children). The data suggest that the Kampango proprietors believed formal education was their prerogative. They assumed that parents' involvement would disturb the preparation of students for the Malawi School Certificate of Education Examination. Therefore, educators were to concentrate on teaching rather than entertaining parents' queries and building relationships. This ideology is socially constructed from the traditional/colonial worldview.

Capitalistic Perspective (School as a Business Venture)

Another subtle ideology that is salient throughout the Kampango data is the proprietors' use of the school as a business. Families and some educators felt that the school existed because of the motivation for profit. They believed the proprietors aimed at producing maximum pass rates to boost the school's reputation, thereby increasing potential future enrollment and thus potential future income.

Proprietors' Construction of Parental Involvement

The phrase 'kicking aside' parents portrays the proprietor's definition of Parental Involvement at the school. At face value, the proprietor's words were an indication of their wish to increase passes (standardized test results) and thus improve the institution's

reputation. But it seems the deficit thinking ideology they held against the parents' ability to effect better student academic performance, and the capitalistic ideology manifested by the proliferation and diversity of services at the school, influenced their perspective concerning parents' responsibility. Hence, the proprietors adopted and implemented a Parental Involvement model that gave power to teachers and disregarded parents' contribution to children's education. Academic instruction was educators' territory, and Parental Involvement policies were non-existent. 'Kicking aside' parents, was a natural outcome of holding to the above ideologies. This action of alienating parents facilitated the implementation of planned services and the achievement of their goals and objectives without outside disturbances.

Educators Ideologies

Deficit Thinking

Educators' deficit thinking ideology fell into two categories: Parents lack skills and parents should be limited to home-based involvement.

1. *Parents lack skills.* Like the proprietors, the educators also believed in parents' inability to contribute to students' academic success. They deduced students had poor home environments for studying. Therefore, little or no homework was sent home. Students did most of their assignments at school.

2. *Parents should be limited to home-based involvement.* Teachers believed that parents' responsibility should be limited to home involvement. Parents' presence at school was unnecessary except when called to deal with children's problems.

Parents Are Responsible for Psychological Development of Students

While believing in their responsibility as instructors, their obligation did not include students' psychological development. According to these educators, behavioral transformation was the parents' prerogative. They criticized parents for their lack of control over children's behaviors citing parents' foremost responsibility to be that of ensuring well-behaved students entered the school gates. Nevertheless, this interpretation of their responsibility contradicts the following: a) literature which indicates that educators can have strong influence on students' behavior (Brewster & Bowen; 2004), and b) Malawian cultural understanding that the village (community) has responsibility for children's character building.

Educators' Construction of Parental Involvement

Two factors shaped educators' construction of Parental Involvement. These factors were: the lack of Parental Involvement policies; and the deficit perspective that parents lacked competence in assisting children at home and lacked control over children's behavior.

Some of the educators at Kampango were amenable to Parental Involvement, but were restricted by the model adopted by the proprietor. Educators are mandated to follow the school's goals and objectives as set by the school district, proprietors, or the government. Lack of adherence to school policies spells dismissal. Although educators had their own ideologies, their Parental Involvement construction to a greater degree was influenced by the school Parental Involvement model, and the related school established policies and strategies or the lack thereof.

The educator's influence on Parental Involvement was limited to their own

pedagogical action concerning assignments and the occasional face-to-face interaction with parents who were invited to the school for children's behavioral issues, or parents who initiated contact with teachers for academic problems. Here is the domain within which educators' ideologies, perspectives and attitudes were exercised. As illustrated in Figure 17, there is a strong link between educators' ideologies, perspectives and attitudes and their construction of Parental Involvement.

Parents' Ideologies

Emergent from the data are two culturally contextualized traditional epistemologies that shaped parents' actions and practices. These include ideologies on Value and Purpose of Education and Roles and Responsibilities of Raising Children.

Value and Purpose of Education

The fact that parents enrolled their children in this expensive school to obtain an education is indicative of the value parents place on education. The purpose for educating children however varied. Some parents with the traditional worldview invested their finances for future dividends—mainly for their own care. It is commonplace in some communities in Malawi for families to believe that the prosperity of the parents and extended family depends on the child who is gainfully employed. Hence, parents' prioritized investment in the children who had potential for financial investment returns, or those who would financially care for them. According to the culture, male children were favored as family breadwinner. Nevertheless, there were exceptions to this belief. Some parents realized that girls could bring more financial returns than boys could. Therefore, they did not care about which gender to educate but simply provided support

to the children that had academic aptitude and viability.

This expectation can be viewed in the light of Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) 'symbolic violence.' Families' financial support for their children's education prescribes children to a life of assisting family members, and because of the culture, the children are powerless but to accept the responsibility. This then is a "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2002, p. 167). Paradoxically, the one thus supported is saddled with responsibility and is unable to prosper because the educated member's interests and prosperity is subsumed and the individual has difficulties moving upward socially despite his education. This is a traditional practice that many offspring in my culture experience.

Responsibility for Raising Children

The raising of children is culturally complicated and contradictory. Families depend on social capital to raise their children. On one hand, there is an understanding that the community is a safety network for raising children; on the other hand, contractual obligations come into play. The adage that "It takes a village to raise a child" is literally a description of how children are raised and socialized. It is not surprising therefore, that parents expect educators to assist in shaping the child. During the focus group at Kampango, parents expressed the need for the school to help them shape and control the children's behavior. Educators also alluded to the fact that parents dumped their children at the school expecting the school to perform miracles. Conversely, parents believed in contractual responsibilities. In paying school fees, they expected returns from the teachers because they had entrusted their children in educators' capable hands.

‘Dumping’ the child for educators to work with was therefore an appropriate outcome of the contract.

Parents’ Construction of Parental Involvement

Families’ decision to get involved in this study was an aggregate of many factors such as their own ideologies, expectations, and influences from other stakeholder ideologies. These factors included:

1. The school practices such as communication from school, invitations from school, grade reports, and educators’ pedagogical strategies aggravated parents own apprehension about the school and their own involvement. Families’ lack of visibility and little or no communication between parents and the school resulted in inability to understand school policies and norms. As illustrated by the arrows, the school exuded considerable influence on parents’ home involvement and school involvement. In addition, a spillover from the school decision to mandate a class period for working on assignments before going home affected some home practices. Educated parents were denied the pleasure of modeling excellence in academics at home.

2. Parents’ definition of Parental Involvement consisted of their role of paying school fees. This traditional ideology meant that formal education is the prerogative of teachers.

3. Parents’ own ideologies emanating from cultural beliefs and other parents’ social contexts had great influence on what happened at home. These contexts included parents’ traditional beliefs, social relationships in the family, parents’ educational level, employment implications manifested in time constraints, and family make-up (single parents). As discussed earlier, traditional beliefs impact some parents’ role construction

especially regarding how the society viewed gender, orphans and social orphans. In the discussion, some parents indicated that they reverted to cultural norms as their safety net when faced with crucial decisions impacting their own children or relatives they cared for. This was evident in the Kampango parents' interviews. For example, orphans, social orphans and females were deemed as less worthy of investment because of the low economic returns for supporting the parents' welfare.

4. Some of the parents who had difficulties with their adolescent children had minimal interaction with them to avoid conflict.

Families' role construction has been studied and the factors penned above fit into extant literature (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Patrikakou, 2008) which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Action Components

The following are Actions taken by schooling agents at Kampango which were contingent to the Alienation Model.

Administrative Actions

1. By virtue of their status, the proprietors exude power and have decision-making autonomy regarding Parental Involvement because of the lack of school boards.
2. There are no policies, regulations or procedures for Parental Involvement.
3. Educators adhere to deficit thinking of parents. Teachers assign parents home-based responsibilities for supporting their children's education.
4. The school fails to establish appropriate communication lines and grade reporting system.

Consequently, these Actions encourage reactions resulting in the following:

a) There is lack of PTA which denies parents the opportunity to socially network with teachers and other parents. This networking provides scaffolding for less educated parents, or a forum for fielding problems and for advocacy.

b) There is compliance to the proprietors' Parental Involvement mandates. Even though educators are amenable to the Parental Involvement concept, they cannot develop a relationship with parents without the proprietor's authority. The social structure shows substantive power imbalance and a top down management system.

c) There are no standard procedures for dealing with parents.

d) Educators expected parents to reinforce school rules (school attendance, uniforms, etc.).

e) There is lack of viable communication which inhibits Parental Involvement. Communication is one way, from school to parents specifically for reminders of late payments routed through students or invitations to discuss students' misbehavior.

f) There is little parent visibility at school. Families are mainly invited to the school for student's behavioral problems.

g) The school does not establish a welcoming atmosphere to parents.

h) Educators' and parents' passive response to the proprietors' power gives legitimacy to the proprietors' actions.

i) There is mutual distrust between educators and parents because of the

disparate understanding of Parental Involvement and the school's lack of transparency.

Pedagogic Actions

The emphasis is on teaching students. Educators' time is protected against interactions with parents in order to direct labors toward their priority; student instruction and better examination performance. Consequently:

- a. There are no planned parent-teacher conferences.
- b. Teachers do not give homework because assignments are completed at school. Families are denied the opportunity to socialize their children over the homework processes and the social interaction or casual conversation that occurs when parents monitor their children's schoolwork.
- c. School relays only summative, end-of-term grade reports. Families are unable to use these reports to help their children to improve their academic performance.

These actions though they seem to advance the school's objectives and perhaps improve students' performance, have negative home and school partnership.

Parents' Actions

1. Parents adhere to traditional ideologies especially in thinking that they cannot effect any academic improvement in their children. Therefore, they delegate their responsibilities to educators.
2. Parents adhere to a contract mentality that the school is under obligation to ensure passes.

3. Parents continue to support the school (paying high fees) because they believe the school is effective in accomplishing the goal of matriculating students to college. Parents continue to commend the school even though the percentage of passes is not comparable to student enrollment and student failures (those not selected to college). Parents enroll their children in the school with the hope that their children would be part of the few who would be successful. Parents feel powerless, isolated, and estranged because of the lack of policies. Their response to their hopelessness is passivity and apathy.

Alliance Model

As described in the cross-case analysis, Balala was inclusive of parents and amenable to a type of partnership with them. Alliance in this study denotes a relationship between two interdependent groups that work together to achieve a common goal. Alliance is best described by Durkheim's (1893/1984) concept of "organ solidarity" which is characterized as an integration of groups that collaborate because of the need to work together for a mutual goal. Each individual or group is an important organ that cannot be dispensed with (Jones, 1985). Since the group possesses specialized characteristics, there is division of labor, but together, the groups collaborate, combine and supplement each other's resources and become stronger in accomplishing the shared purposes. However, each group enters the alliance with a set of expectations regarding functions and benefits, hence, the need for contracts which offset the imbalance of power arising from the dominant group. The concepts that follow provide tenets of the Alliance Model.

Balala Proprietor's Ideologies

Influence of Epistemology and Ethics

A fundamental element that informed the Balala proprietor worldview was her religion. The proprietor belonged to the Baha'i faith which adheres to several social principles centered on equality of all human beings created by a monotheistic God. Some of these principles are the 'unity in humanity,' 'universal compulsory education,' and 'equality between men and women' (May, 1997; Smith, 2008).

Progressive Educational Perspectives

Being the first chairperson of the organization to establish PTA in private secondary schools, she incorporated innovative ideas and practices in order to provide educational services commensurate to her understanding of partnership development with parents. Consequently, the school model designated an alliance between the school and parents as key to student success.

Proprietor's Parental Involvement Construction

Thus, the proprietor incorporated parents' contributions and involvement in order to address her unique paradigm. The policies she established laid the foundation for instituting three very important processes which confirmed the collaboration between the school and parents: the PTA, parent-teacher conferences, and communication with parents. Although initiated by the school, parents were given the mandate and fully controlled the functions of the PTA, thereby exhibiting some elements of partnership.

Educator's Ideologies

One distinct teachers' ideology was apparent from the data, that parents can

contribute to children's academic success. This ideology aligned with the proprietors' ideology. It is possible that teachers took their cue from the policies already instituted at the school.

Parents Can Contribute to Children's Academic Success and Psychological Development

The Balala teachers believed that responsibility for a psychologically and academically well-rounded student fell upon both parents and teachers (Hedeen, Moses, & Peter, 2011). Teacher Jiyani encapsulated this understanding, thus, "*At home, the child has to be well disciplined; at school, also he has to be well disciplined. At home, he must be given time to study, at school also time to learn.*" Believing thus, teachers' attitudes resulted in appropriate actions and practices befitting this ideology.

Educator's Construction of Parental Involvement

The existence of Parental Involvement policies and procedures at the Balala prompted appropriate actions from educators making it easier for them to implement Parental Involvement strategies. Because of their understanding of the purpose of Parental Involvement, teachers expressed support of the policies and in turn created an environment within which parents and teachers freely interacted. Balala teachers understood that Parental Involvement was core to student success. They acknowledged that parents possessed skills and resources that complemented their efforts at school. Therefore, some teachers' pedagogical practices incorporated an open-door policy to give parents the opportunity to discuss their children's performance. Individual teachers initiated contact with parents to discuss children's assignments.

Parents' Ideologies

Progressive Understanding of Value of Education

Predominantly parents shared a nontraditional or contemporary epistemology concerning the purpose of education which was for children to reach their possible or attainable development, be self-reliant and become productive members of society. Teachers at both schools acknowledged the parents' habitus. In addition, these parents knew that it was their responsibility to collaborate with teachers in providing academic support which was manifested in a variety of ways. An examination of reasons for this type of epistemology showed that almost all parents in this school were middle class with most of them holding government positions.

Parents' Construction of Parental Involvement

School's policies and parents own progressive ideologies fostered parents' disposition and motivations to participate in the governance of the school. Although a few parents had a negative view of the services, almost all the parents commended the school for its efforts in initiating services such as the PTA. Even though this was a private school, parents were willing to provide resources to assist the school and achieve the goal of providing quality education.

Action Components

The following Action components are representative of the Alliance Model.

Administrative Actions

1. Proprietors have strong religious or ethical beliefs which inform their

worldview and practices.

2. Proprietors purposely create policies and procedures that are conducive to the implementation of collaboration between parents and educators and are shared with other schooling agents.

3. Efforts are made to ensure that all schooling agents understand the tenets, policies and procedure. Appropriate protocols are put in place for easy implementation to the model, such as:

a. Proprietor initiates or establishes PTA for parents and teacher collaboration.

b. There is partial power sharing with parents through the PTA, an avenue where both educators and parents can interface and share ideas. For example, while the Balala parents learned strategies for assisting their children from teachers and participated in managerial function, they did not possess authority to engage in administrative decisions-making pertaining to long-term plans for the school or employment of educators.

4. Two-way communication between the school and parents is encouraged.

Pedagogic Actions

In this Model, strategies are developed to advance the institution's objectives and improve student performance. The school believes in the participation of parents in student academics; therefore, the following actions are put into place:

1. Time is created for teachers and parents to interact, a critical time for sharing information about the children. The school institutes parent-teacher conferences periodically and encourages parents to attend.

2. Due to the open-door policies, the teachers are able to relay both formative and summative grade reports. These formative reports aid parents in helping their children improve their academic performance.

3. Parents are provided with strategies for assisting children with their homework. In so doing parents have opportunity to monitor assignments and academically socialize with children to instill value for education.

Parents' Actions

1. Parents accept and use the school's open-door policy to interact with children about their academic performance.

2. Parents provide scaffolding for their children because the parents understand the world of academia to help their children navigate through it. They also provide educational support by tutoring or hiring tutors.

3. Although the parents pay school fees, they are willing to invest their time and additional money to support the school and its goals.

In the trajectory of Alliance Model Actions, teachers' Actions are influenced by the proprietors' Actions and their own construction of Parental Involvement; likewise, parents' Actions are positively affected by administrative Actions, teachers' Actions and parents' own construction of Parental Involvement.

Other Contexts Influencing Parental Involvement Common to Both Models

As salient as the ideologies are, parents from both schools had apparent basic factors influencing their decision to get involved. These factors included parents' social contexts (time, education and culture) and children's psychological and developmental

issues.

1. Scarcity of time was a common denominator expressed by most parents in both institutions. This poverty of time negated their visibility at school and limited their time for supporting their children at home.

2. Some of the parents do not assist children with homework due to lack of self-efficacy in handling secondary school curricula. In addition, some parents clearly see the curriculum as beyond their understanding and thus fail to assist with homework.

3. Psychological and developmental issues play a role in parents' type of school and home involvement. Students going through identity crisis and those who do not understand the value of education can have negative attitudes toward education, teachers and parents. Some children alienate themselves from parents and others want parental support. In some cases, monitoring teenagers' social relationships and academic progress becomes contentious resulting in limited parental home-based involvement and effectiveness. During this crisis-laden period, parents have to navigate their relationship with children and parents welcome teachers' assistance in shaping their children's character.

Situating the Theory in Literature by Theoretical Components

Ideologies

The most significant component of the "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" is the role and influence of ideology in Parental Involvement. Schooling agents' ideologies affected how they conceptualized and experienced Parental Involvement in these schools. Each of the schooling agents had ideologies that influence their perspective of Parental Involvement and their role in it.

These ideologies have their foundations in two sources: deep-rooted beliefs from cultural and traditional capital; and beliefs resulting from a paradigm shift of acquired worldviews. Literature posits that ideologies permeate all areas of society (Lather, 1999; McLaren, 2007; Nodelman, 1994; Thompson, 1987). Human beings cannot escape having mental models emanating from their beliefs, experiences and worldviews. These ideologies, systems of beliefs acquired and shared by some members of the society can either be negative or positive and are the basis for social action (Dijk, 1998, 2004, 2006).

Negative Ideology. Ideology has mostly been associated with its negative connotation. Marx, Engels, and Arthur (1970) posited ideological concepts of social structure and class division that privileges the ruling class. The elite distort reality and suppose their ideas are what the populous believe and want. This leads to domination and control of society by a selected few (Lawhead, 2015; Marx, Engels, & Arthur, 1970).

Thompson (1987) further expounds on the negative power relations resulting in domination. He proposes that ideology can be manifested through legitimation; dissimulation, fragmentation and reification. Legitimations are institutional claims that justify mandates or operations. For example, Kampango promoted the alienation of parents from schools and presented its legitimacy by portraying a school that functioned better and matriculated more children to college without Parental Involvement. Dissimulation works through concealment or obscurity of actual practices or of reality. Kampango promoted the boarding school as the best way for getting better exam results even though many children in the boarding had to repeat the examination class several times to increase their selectability. Fragmentation refers to the separation of groups to sustain the domination. In healthy working environments, teachers have the role of

promoting partnership and collaboration, instead using the example of Kampango, teachers, when echoing the proprietor's view—parents were seen as at fault for enrolling delinquent children, were increasing fragmentation. Reification denotes the presentation of issues as permanent even though they are temporary. Kampango educators believed Parental Involvement was impossible due the school's immensity and the attitude of the proprietors. They could not see it as something they could do after the first attempt failed.

Positive Ideology. Positive ideology on the other hand influences positive action (Dijk, 2000; Donald & Hall, 1986) for it “provides the concepts, categories, images, and ideas by means of which people make sense of their social, and political worlds, form projects, come to a certain consciousness of their place in the world and act in it” (Donald & Hall, 1986, p. x). Balala provides an example of this different aspect of ideological perspectives. Schooling agents at Balala adhered to progressive ideological perspectives.

According to Thompson (1987), ideology is manifested through three levels of power relations: actions of social agents, social institutions and social structures. He points out that agents practice their interests and purposes at the action level, while at the institution level where “stable clusters of rules and resources, together with social relationships” (p. 282) abide, power is used by some privileged agents to make decision and influence practices. In this study schooling agents acted out at the action level, the proprietors had more power due to their social status to pursue their purposes and mandated rules which others with less power within the social structures could attempt to oppose or failed to oppose. The divergence between Thompson's manifestation of ideology and the experiences at Kampango is at the social structure level. Although the proprietors made decisions and influenced practices, there was no opposition from the

parents or teachers, while at Balala, efforts were made to provide balance to the social structure by the level of parents' participation in children's education.

Construction of Parental Involvement

The present theory elucidates how all schooling agents undergo the construction of Parental Involvement. The data shows several factors that promote or hinder Parental Involvement which validate extant studies that suggest educators' construction of Parental Involvement depends on the environment set by the school, and educators' own self-efficacy in dealing with parents (training implied) (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). In addition, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) and Patrikakou (2008) indicate that parents' construction of their role in education not only depends on parents' own self-efficacy but it includes their perception of invitation (from teachers or children) to participate. Nevertheless, their involvement is impacted by their own social contexts (level of education, cultural beliefs and time constraints). While agreeing with previous findings, this study contributes to literature revealing the influence and impact of proprietors' ideology on schooling agents' conceptualization of Parental Involvement.

Actions

Another component to the "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" are Actions that schooling agents enact that contribute to promoting or hindering Parental Involvement. These Actions include: Administrative Actions, Pedagogic Actions and Parental Actions. Actions always engender reactions. Shelby (2003) suggests that ideologies function to mediate actions and interactions. According to Otakpor (1985) these social actions can emanate from one's "pressures

inherent in the situation in which they find themselves” (p. 140). The theory of social action proposed by Weber (1978) examines the cause and effect of people’s actions and their related meanings and how these actions affect the behavior of others. Weber proposes four types of actions: Traditional Social Actions influenced by agents’ traditions, Affective Social Actions controlled by agents’ emotions, Value Rational Social Actions influenced by agents’ belief systems and values about appropriate behavior, and Instrumentally Rational Actions controlled by the need to achieve certain goals and are accomplished by choosing the best actions for producing the required outcomes. Hence, these tenets provide an insight into the actions taken by schooling agents in this study. The actions undertaken by the schooling agents are a manifestation of Weber’s (1978) type of social actions. The schooling agents portrayed their perspective in what was important to them and how they put these Actions to serve what they felt would benefit them.

The Parental Involvement Models implemented by the institutions influenced the type of Actions schooling agents took. While Balala took a stance to include parents, Kampango alienated parents. Kampango’s Pedagogic Actions also reflect Bourdieu’s concept of “pedagogic actions” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 22)—arbitrary action implemented by the school system which disenfranchise parents of low socioeconomic status and their children’s educational achievement. According to Grenfell (2008), these pedagogic actions are:

constituted according to principles—upon which the form and content of teaching and learning are created—that are grounded in particular class culture in that of the dominant classes. Such cultural prerequisites are arbitrary; they . . . operate as a medium through which the culture of the dominant acts in order to exclude the dominated. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 158-159)

In the context of Parental Involvement, other Parental Involvement authors have

delineated Actions taken by schools to either alienate or include parents. The Actions taken by Kampango and Balala schooling agents confirm the actions Swap's (1993) proposes in her Parental Involvement models referred below. In addition, Actions taken by Balala, agree with Christenson and Sheridan's (2001) suggested types of Actions for building a strong relationship between the school and parents.

Models

I identified two unique models from data which extend the types of Parental Involvement models in literature. The existing models focus on specific issues in the field of Parental Involvement and provide lenses for understanding Parental Involvement issues while offering schools frameworks for establishing and improving the collaboration between parents and the school. For example, the James Comer's (1988) Model implemented in 120 inner-city schools in 1968 aimed at building the capacity of all stakeholders to promote school reform; the Levin's (1989) Accelerated School Model for at-risk children included parents in closing the achievement gap; the Sacramento City Teachers Association's Parent-Teacher Home-Visit Project built trust relationships between the school and parents (Parent-Teacher Home-Visit Project, www.pthvp.org); and the Bouchard's Reciprocal Partnership Model focused on empowering both parents and teachers to share information and to actualize their resources for the benefit of the children (Deslandes, 2001).

For the present study, however, I considered two models that provide insight into my Alienation and Alliance Models: Swap's (1993) Parental Involvement models, and Joyce Epstein's (2001) Overlapping Sphere of Influence Model. The Alienation Model in the present study, like Swap's (1993) Protective Model, is a traditional approach to

Parental Involvement. On the other hand, the Alliance Model is a cross between Swap's School to Home Transmission Model and the Partnership Model.

The difference between the models in my theory and previous models rests on the autonomous power of proprietors who mandate policies, and positively or negatively controlled the operations of the institutions. Bourdieu (1977, 1992, 1993, 2008) proposes that control occurs when one dominant group possesses more capital, whether it be economic, cultural, or social.

1. *Comparison of Models in the "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" with Swap's Models.* The Kampango Alienation Parental Involvement Model corresponds to Swap's (1993) "protective model" adopted by schools to reduce conflict between the school and parents, thereby "protecting the school from interference by parents" (p. 28). Like Swap's "protective model," Kampango was building the institution's reputation without investing in positive relationships with parents and community. The assumptions for this model are that parents accept school authority and mandates while relegating the responsibility of their children's education to educators, expecting them to be accountable for academic success. Families' role in their children's education is limited to home involvement. While the Kampango model is similar, one significant difference is that the proprietor alienated the parents not only to avoid conflict with parents but to build the school's reputation through an impressive pass rate and thereby increase school enrollment. Consequently, the size of the school made it impossible to strategize Parental Involvement; hence, parents had to be "kicked aside."

2. *Balala's Alliance Model* on the other hand is a cross between Swap's (1993)

Home to School Transmission Model and the Partnership Model. The purposes of the Alliance Model are similar to the Home to School Transmission Model. The school expects the parents to support the school's goals and values including assisting and facilitating school extracurricular activities and supporting school development. Nevertheless, the Alliance Model reflects some of the elements from Swap's Partnership Model.

The Swap (1993) Partnership Model encourages full participation of parents in all areas of school functions (curriculum, school improvements, and social events). Within her Partnership Model, Swap provides four elements of a true partnership, which include: creating two-way communication, enhancing learning at home and at school, providing mutual support, and making joint decisions. In addition, Swap provides ways how educators and parents can mutually support each other. The Balala Alliance Model however is different from Swap's model in that only the proprietor had the prerogative to provide the school's vision and had overriding veto power in administrative and management decisions. Little was done to support parents or to improve their effectiveness.

The term Alliance befits Balala in that the school expected assistance from the parents but did not fully establish collaboration in all areas of school operations. Parents were seen as allies of the school. These allies worked together to ensure each party fulfilled its contractual obligations. The school provided the resources and instruction to children and the parent group provided grounding for the students and assisted in improving both the school's social and physical infrastructure. In addition, there was an understanding that each group must honor the other groups' requests, most especially if

these requests were mutually beneficial, promoted the students' welfare and facilitated students' academic success. Although there was collaboration, Parental Involvement did not sanction full partnership.

3. *Comparison of Models in the "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" with Epstein's Models.* I would be amiss not to mention Epstein's (2001) model of Parental Involvement that has been used in many Parental Involvement studies. Her "overlapping spheres of influence" (p. 32) is a partnership model underscoring the collaboration between three spheres: the school, parents and community. It emphasizes the overlapping nature of the spheres that mutually create an environment for sharing responsibility for the developing child, even though each sphere has separate functions in the collaboration. Epstein proposes that schools act like families (family-like schools) in caring and nurturing children, while families act like schools in ensuring that students are learning (school-like families). In addition, she delineates six types of Parent Involvement practices that are critical in such partnerships. These include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1986). The type of relationship proposed by Epstein would be difficult to administer at Kampango because of the types of ideologies the schooling agents adhere to. Some Parental Involvement elements such as communicating, learning at home and some parents' involvement in decision-making are implemented at Balala. The fact that the school had not emphasized staff development for teachers and parents negated a viable Parental Involvement venture. In addition, the concept of Parental Involvement in Malawi is still new, many teachers and parents still have difficulties fully realizing its utility and how to implement it when they have paucity

of time.

Although both Swap's (1993) and Epstein's (2001) models are similar, they differ from the Alliance model because they focus on encouraging the school's action in involving parents but leave out the school's role in nurturing or hindering Parental Involvement—such elements as the influence of ideology and the power exuded by proprietors. Unlike public schools where the school district can mandate Parental Involvement, proprietors make autonomous decisions concerning the educational services they provide.

Parents' Social Contexts

Education is highly valued in developing countries. Malawi is an impoverished country ranked as the 18th least developed country in the world (UNDP, 2016). Living in one of the poorest countries, parents view education as a vehicle for breaking out of the circle of poverty. Education is deemed important for survival not only for the student, but for the family. Parents' construction of Parental Involvement in their children's education depends on their perspectives concerning the purpose of education. Hence, parents perceive their involvement in the light of their financial resources (for tuition) which in the Malawian economic scale is disproportionately larger than an adult's yearly earnings (Herz & Sperling, 2004).

The elements that influence parents' involvement in children's education and their role construction established in this study are strongly supported by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005). These authors delineated three motivational constructs for parents' engagement in children's education namely: parents' role construction about their responsibility for child's learning outcomes, their sense of efficacy for assisting the child

to succeed in his education (which may be a result of their level of education or the in curriculum), and invitations to get involved from specific groups such as educators and children. As observed at Kampango, parents were excluded because of lack of invitations from the school and from their own adolescent children.

The cultural implications in the Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) model focus on immigrants of low social economic status, their understanding of the school system, language barriers and conflict between their values and North American values. On the contrary, parents' Parental Involvement construction in this study includes in-depth habitus derived from Malawian traditional epistemologies, specifically cultural implication regarding the purpose of children's education which may preclude or disenfranchise the girl child, the orphans and social orphans. The discussion of beliefs by Hoover-Dempsey et al. falls short in that it does not consider the cultural implication especially relevant for collective cultures. Their discussion reflects perspectives of Parental Involvement in individualistic societies and does not apply to schools in developing countries.

With regards to parents' traditional understanding of their roles and responsibilities pertaining to their involvement and collaboration with the school, I find some correspondence between the findings from the present study with Coleman's (1988) tenets of social capital which include "obligations," "expectations and trustworthiness of structures," "information channels," and "norms and effective sanctions." According to Coleman (1988), the trustworthiness of a relationship can be measured by the reciprocation of the mutual obligations and expectations and regulated by norms and sanctions.

In the Malawian social context, parents use their social networks to raise their children. There are trade-offs (obligations and expectations) with other members of the community who assist in caring for the children, that is, ‘you take care of mine, I take care of yours.’ Families trust those who are part of the social network. There is intergenerational closure as the communication lines are open with explicit and implicit understanding of values and expectations. This ideology is a social capital that provides a safety-net for busy parents. The act of dumping children equates the entrusting of children to educators. The school has obligations to ensure students pass while parents assist the school with resources. Thus, parents trust the school and hold the educators responsible for the academic success of their children.

Summary

Trajectory of Ideologies

This theory stresses that Parental Involvement in private schools is largely influenced by the proprietors’ ideologies as they translate into school Parental Involvement models, policies and subsequent perspectives, attitudes and practices.

Although schooling agents have their own ideologies that influence their perspectives and attitudes, the presence of additional ideologies held by other agents further exacerbate the schooling agents’ actions. The domino-effect trajectory starts with the proprietors’ ideology exerting influence on educators’ attitudes and practices and in turn, educators’ perspectives and attitudes are exhibited in their practices. As teachers operate within the mandates established by the school, their influence becomes limited to classroom practices. Their relationship with parents is mainly built from the parent-teacher conferences mandated by the school and if lacking, there is no relationship. On

the other hand, some aspects of parents' actions minimally influenced both administrative action and teachers' behavior. Schools had to accommodate parents who had no time to show up at school. The findings reveal parents' awareness of the institution's power and its domination over the schooling processes. However, parents continued to enroll their children at the school because they had very little or no recourse for the education of their children. This is what Bourdieu terms symbolic violence: when agents accept and collaborate in perpetuating the problem (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) even when it's not to their favor.

Primarily, visibility of parents and their participation in their children's education at school depended on policies set by the school and the environment established by the educators (Epstein, 2001). Once the policies were set, the responsibility for Parental Involvement rested on teachers because they were the agents who interfaced with parents, much more than administrators. Secondly, parents with higher levels of education have the self-efficacy to collaborate with educators (Lareau, 2000). They initiate contact with the school without waiting for the school's invitation.

Lessons Learned

The "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" is derived from two private schools and it includes the actions and interactions between proprietors and other schooling agents. The theory presents a strong link between ideologies and Parental Involvement implementation in the two schools. The proprietors' ideologies have much influence on the school's Parental Implementation model and the subsequent Actions executed administratively and pedagogically at school, and parents' Actions both at home and at school. All other schooling agent's ideologies play a

secondary role in the development and implementation of Parental Involvement in schools. This theory also highlights the cultural elements that influence parents' perspective of involvement in children's education. The presence or lack of school policies has minor effect on home-based involvement. Parents' home involvement is mediated by their ideologies (deep cultural beliefs) and the value they place on education. The "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" clearly delineates how ideologies can be the basis for the alienation of parents in their children's education or provide opportunities for the formation of alliances between parents and educators for children's education.

I am not aware of Parental Involvement theories that focus on ideologies of proprietors of private secondary schools. The lack of theoretical constructs of Parental Involvement in Malawi could be attributed to several factors including: the novelty of both Parental Involvement in secondary schools and subsequent research in the private, public and parochial secondary schools in Malawi; the foci of Parental Involvement studies conducted (the few studies conducted on Parental Involvement have concentrated on parent and community involvement in primary schools including PTA and its role); and the multidimensionality of Parental Involvement concepts in schools. The components of this "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" are not exhaustive. Parental Involvement research in other private secondary schools could yield theoretical elements that contribute to this model. This theory contributes to Parental Involvement theories and models suggested in literature and specifically provide a Parental Involvement framework for viewing school-family relations in Malawian private secondary schools.

Implications for Practice

Recommendations for Kampango Secondary School

It has been established that Parental Involvement in children's education at the secondary level has significantly contributed to students' academic success (Jeynes, 2007; Patrikakou 2008). Although the proprietors at Kampango believe in isolating parents, they needed to reconsider their ideology for the sake of improving relationships with parents for the sake of academic performance of day scholars. Engaging parents in the school would alter how the school is viewed. Perhaps the proprietor's goals of improving pass rates and increasing enrollment would be realized. The study reveals that parents have little power to establish relationships with the educators. The onus falls on the school to initiate a partnership with parents. The following suggestions addressing some of the major issues revealed at Kampango are organized into: Assessing the Viability of Parental Involvement, Building Capacity of Educators, Creating Scaffolding for Parent's Home-based and School-based Involvement, and Developing Better Communication Lines.

Assessing the Viability of Parental Involvement

The assessment of the viability of Parental Involvement should be in two areas: policy issues and parental needs. It is important that the school ascertain the percentage of day scholars accepted into the university with the current policy of non-Parental Involvement. The findings would factor into the development of policies for involving parents at the school. Major considerations should be to develop policies for Parental Involvement that would address the findings brought to the fore in this study; finding

solutions to the barriers and advancing the enhancers of Parental Involvement.

It is important that the assessment should include what parents want for their children, and how they would want to be involved (Graue, 1998 LaBahn, 1995; Senge et al., 2000). In addition, the assessments should also include day scholar environments and parents' extant home-involvement strategies, their strengths and weaknesses. An assessment of best Parental Involvement models and practices should also be conducted to augment the policy developed for the institutions. Strategies should be developed assessing the home environment and parents' home involvement strategies. The results would be used in drawing up a curriculum for training parents in strategies for helping parents in their efforts to academically assist their children or for addressing the psychosocial issues causing conflict at home.

The school should also invest in experimenting with Parental Involvement. Short term plans, possibly for a year, should be drawn up and implemented to determine whether Parental Involvement would be viable for the school. This venture would only be successful if the school collaborated with willing parents to participate in the trial. Such undertaking would increase relationships and boost the morale of parents. The social capital realized from this pilot project would be a conduit for increasing parents' participation at the school and improving students' academic performance.

Building Capacity of Educators

Feasibility and effectiveness of Parental Involvement policy in any school depends mainly on teachers who interact with parents. Many educators harbor deficit thinking towards parents because they believe that academic performance is solely dependent on them. Many teachers are not prepared nor do they have the skills for

building relationships with parents (Marphatia et al., 2010). Maphosa, Mutekwe, Macingambi, Wadesango, and Ndofirepi (2012) suggest training for teachers to be accountable to parents. Because Parental Involvement in secondary schools in Malawi is a novel idea and is not emphasized in teacher preparation colleges, the institution would have to develop their own training. Professional development for teachers, therefore, would enhance the implementation of Parental Involvement (Bull et al., 2008; Epstein, 2001) and would include how to operationalize the policies. The educators could adapt materials from a variety of resources available from publishers and on the internet. The training would also provide skills in building relationships with parents, establishing a welcoming school atmosphere to give parents a sense of being valued and, developing support for parent's home-based involvement and school-based involvement.

Creating Scaffolding for Parents' Home-based and School-based Involvement

Many of the Kampango parents had negligible to no involvement at the school except to go and pay school fees, sometimes even this task was delegated to the child. In addition, some parents had minimal home school-related interaction. Most of the parents had no clue about their Parental Involvement responsibilities. These factors call for communicative action between the school and parents, where all schooling agents (educators and parents) share goals and objectives pertaining to their aspirations for the children. This would result in planned scaffolding for parents, so that they can incrementally be involved in their children's education and increase their social networks. The following are actions that could be undertaken: the school should share and clarify all policies, expectations, guidelines and strategies to ensure that both parents and educators have an understanding of their responsibilities. In addition, the school should

plan on training parents to augment their knowledge and skills pertaining to decision-making and home-involvement strategies for parenting and monitoring their adolescents. Included in the training would be sessions on how to reduce cultural perspectives and negative stereotypes that hinder support for girls, orphans and social orphans.

Developing Better Communication Lines

Findings show a need for the institution to develop better communication lines. Since infrastructure in Malawi is inadequate, the school has an uphill battle for establishing viable communication with its many parents. Apart from grade reports and letters that the institution has used to communicate with parents, it could try other ways of reaching parents without draining their school coffers. These strategies could include a website, Facebook and other online social media programs as the ubiquitous use of cellphones in Malawi allows people to access these media sites. In addition, there are a variety of strategies the school could try in order to open communication lines with parents.

1. Instead of a newsletter, the school would mandate a take-home folder for day scholars whom educators and parents would use to communicate important information, such as teachers' expectations, how parents can assist the children, deadlines, and even congratulating students that are doing well.

2. The school could invest in school-wide first day-of-school event for parents. The school would use the day to discuss policies, rules and regulations. Furthermore, subject teachers would discuss with parents' strategies for assisting students. This event would be announced in the media. Radio and TV announcements in Malawi have proved to work better than the postal services or sending invitations through children. Monetary

incentives have attracted participants (Collins, Bronte-Tinkew, & Burkhauser, 2008) and incentives could be announced through media. I believe that incentives do promote participation as manifested during data collection for this study.

3. The school should have open house days for parents to view students' class projects. The school would designate a day for each subject or each class. During the designated time, parents and teachers would interact and discuss students' performance.

Establishing a Welcoming Atmosphere

Kampango has inadvertently portrayed a closed environment by its lack of Parental Involvement. Marphatia et al. (2010) found that parents' visibility in Malawi primary schools depended on the type of relationship fostered between parents and educators. I suggest that the school should cultivate relationships with parents and the community/village where it is situated.

1. The institution should assign a resource center for parents' education, and an ombudsman or provost office for meeting with parents and students.

2. The institution should explore the establishment of service learning projects that require participation of community members. This network of parents, students and teachers would increase the institution's appeal.

3. Since the institution is situated in the community/village, efforts should be made for the proprietor to hold meetings with the community chief and dignitaries, or perhaps invite them to visit the school. If possible, earlier discussions about collaboration in improving the community could be revisited.

4. The institution should share its goals and objectives to parents. The proprietors must be willing to disseminate information about school-related activities

including students' projects in addition to the much-promoted football matches.

Recommendations for Balala Secondary School

The involvement of parents in their children's education had bolstered relationship between the institution and the parents. Although some of the functions of the collaboration were not doing well at my second visit, parents and teachers valued each other's contribution to the education of the children. To further advance the partnership and improve some of the functions that were being undermined for lack of follow through, the following suggestions could address the problems the institution faces.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Relationship

The aim of evaluating the Parental Involvement program at Balala is to improve the program and to optimize the various functions that schooling agents undertake within the relationship. Efforts should be made to evaluate the program for its effectiveness (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011) in involving parents. Specifically, this evaluation should concentrate on two aspects: improving the program and capacity building.

With the goal of improving Parental Involvement, the evaluation would focus on identifying strengths and weaknesses, barriers (including reasons for inactivity) and enhancers of the program; and also, emphasize participants' perception of the program and its utility. Furthermore, the investigation would focus on ascertaining schooling agents' opinion of changes needed for viable partnerships, identifying immediate- and long-term actions for the institution to undertake, identifying resources needed for the

venture, and clarifying roles and responsibilities of participants. The results would be used to improve implementation of Parental Involvement at the school.

Notwithstanding the presence of a PTA, it was apparent that its functions were floundering. The data showed that new teachers hired after 2007 were not aware of the functions of the PTA. This is indicative of lack of professional development for staff and educators and lack of interest in the collaboration by certain stakeholders. In this evaluation, then, it would be critical to identify critical knowledge and skills that would enhance the implementation of Parental Involvement. Furthermore, an assessment should be conducted of best practices from organizations that have successfully implemented Parental Involvement.

It is imperative that the PTA and other key personnel are included in the planning and administration process of the formative evaluation, as well as in the revision of the extant policies. Families should feel welcome to participate as was the case when the PTA was introduced at the school. Depending on the proprietors' goals for the school, the evaluation results would be significant in the revision of the extant policies. Participation of parents who are knowledgeable in policy development should be welcomed.

Facilitating Schooling Agents' Capacity Building

The institution should facilitate a comprehensive professional development program to strengthen the operational capacity of all members. Specifically, educators must be trained in a variety of strategies for Parental Involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein et al., 2009; Hornby, 2000; Swap, 1993). Convincing reluctant parents to come for training would prove difficult and much effort would be needed to

entice the uninvolved parents to participate. Involving willing parents to participate perhaps would provide the vicarious experience for other parents to get involved. A significant step in this venture would be that of sharing and clarifying the institution's vision, goals, objectives and Parental Involvement policies to reduce disparity in understanding of the venture.

Policy Implications

1. The government should put more emphasis on Parental Involvement in private secondary schools, especially schools that have day scholars because students in these schools do not have the same privileges and resources for studying that boarders have.
2. Government needs to consider policies that govern the implementation of Parental Involvement in private secondary schools such as establishing a regulatory mechanism.
3. The government should discuss with private school proprietors how to implement the community participation policy.
4. Establish forums that give communities involved with private schools the opportunities to voice their concerns and suggest solutions.
5. Private school principals, management committees and PTAs should be trained in policy, implementation and management.
6. The government should emphasize strategies for parent participation in children's learning outcomes. Training and strategies for home involvement should be made available to both private and government assisted day secondary schools.
7. The government in collaboration with private schools should negotiate with NGOs to provide community participation training to private secondary school educators

and parents. Perhaps programs such as the Literacy Boost implemented by Save the Children can be extended to Secondary Schools.

8. The government should consider increasing female secondary school teachers who can be role models to girls.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Parental Involvement studies in Malawi have concentrated on parents' contributions in PTA and in school development. A few studies have been undertaken to explore Parent Involvement at the primary school level, but there is paucity of Parental Involvement studies at the secondary school level. This study highlights the positive relationships arising from the institution's intentionality in involving parents in their children's education, and the misperceptions that surface when Parental Involvement policies are non-existent or when the institution isolates parents. The development of the "Theory of Ideological Differentiation of Parental Involvement in Malawi" contributes to literature and provides an analytical framework for viewing Parental Involvement in private schools in Malawi. Since my study focused on private secondary schools, further studies should be conducted to determine whether this theory applies to environments such as the Malawi CDSSs.

Due to the complex nature of Parental Involvement, additional studies should establish the extent of Parent Involvement especially in the following areas: level of effectiveness of secondary school parent home-involvement; effects of parents' education in determining children's academic success; and the role of parents' aspirations and expectations on children's completion of high school education.

APPENDIX

IRB APPROVAL

Andrews University

November 21, 2006

Josephine Katenga
8893 Grove Avenue
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Dear Josephine,

RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

IRB Protocol #: 06-103 **Application Type:** Original **Dept:** Teaching, Learning & Curricu.
Review Category: Exempt **Action Taken:** Approved **Advisor:** Shirley Freed
Protocol Title: Family Involvement in Children's Education in Malawi Secondary Schools: Case Studies in
Three Private Secondary Schools

This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for research. You have been given clearance to proceed with your research plans.

All changes made to the study design and/or consent form, after initiation of the project, require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions.

The duration of the present approval is for one year. If your research is going to take more than one year, you must apply for an extension of your approval in order to be authorized to continue with this project.

Some proposal and research design designs may be of such a nature that participation in the project may involve certain risks to human subjects. If your project is one of this nature and in the implementation of your project an incidence occurs which results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, such an occurrence must be reported immediately in writing to the Institutional Review Board. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University physician, Dr. Loren Hamel, by calling (269) 473-2222.

We wish you success as you implement the research project as outlined in the approved protocol.

Sincerely,



Michael D Pearson
Secretary
Institutional Review Board

Office of Scholarly Research
(269) 471-6360 Fax: (269) 471-6246 E-mail: irb@andrews.edu
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104

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