CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The social, political and economic environment currently prevailing in Malawi as a result of the introduction of the multi-party political system in 1994 has necessitated reform in various sectors of social development in Malawian society, particularly in the education sector. Up to 1994, the Malawian education system was highly centralised. The system had and continues to experience problems related to lack of access, efficiency, quality and equity. The legacy of one party dictatorship, which saw Malawi cocooned in a state of underdevelopment for thirty-one years, has been widespread, as shown by studies on poverty in Malawi, notably "Malawi Growth Through Poverty" (World Bank 1990) and "The Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi" (United Nations and Government of Malawi (GoM) 1994). The two documents mentioned above also note that rural and urban poverty is estimated at 60 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. The severity of poverty in Malawi is reflected in the country's social indicators, which include a high mortality rate, high population density, household food insecurity, environmental degradation, a high illiteracy rate, low education coverage, a high fertility rate, high gender imbalances, high HIV/AIDS prevalence and declining income levels (Poverty Monitoring Unit/UNICEF 1997; National Statistical Office 1996).

The centre-piece of the policy agenda for national development for the new government [The United Democratic Front (UDF)] is poverty alleviation. In October 1995, the government produced a policy document entitled, "Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme". The document defines poverty alleviation as "a process through which the poor are empowered to improve their plight and contribute to national development" (UNDP 1997, p.14). The document further states that the major role of the state is to provide a conducive environment for the implementation of poverty

alleviation programmes, the success of which is dependent on "a strong partnership with NGOs, donors, and the private sector" (UNDP 1997, p.14). The document acknowledges that any long-term strategy to eradicate poverty must be linked closely to improvements in the quality and quantity of education. One of the key strategies highly recommended in the policy is the promotion of participation by the beneficiaries in all aspects of the programmes. This is based on the assumption that an increase in the coverage of basic education[1] leads to adaptation of better technologies to improve agricultural production and better prospects of employment, reduced infant and maternal mortality, and lower incidence of diseases and lower fertility rates (National Economic Council 2000).

In order to address the problems which have a direct link to poverty, the government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994. The result was a rapid increase in enrolment levels from 1.8 to 3.2 million pupils (GoM 1999), which in turn had its own consequences, not only on the socio-economic landscape, but also on the dynamics and practicalities of the implementation of FPE. Inflicted with a lack of trained teachers, high drop out and repetition rates, and poor quality of education, the government's need to ameliorate the situation became apparent, necessitating the swift introduction of new policies. One notable policy direction that emerged and became enshrined in Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme (GoM 1995, pp.47-48), is the participation of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in all programmes aimed to alleviate poverty, with emphasis on provision of education at all levels but particularly at the basic education level.

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[1] The definition of basic education and basic learning needs depends on a number of variables and may be specific to environment, country and culture. In Malawi, basic education is defined as the imparting of basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as the provision of essential knowledge, attitudes that help people to become self-reliant, continue learning and contribute to the development of their country (GoM, n.d., p. 12).

1.1 The Problem Being Investigated

This study aims to investigate the extent to which NGOs facilitate the participation of its beneficiaries and, how they build and sustain partnerships with other stakeholders in education in Malawi. The proliferation of NGOs as a result of policies developed under the new government, has opened a new era in the development process, especially in education. Since 1994, the number of NGOs in Malawi has increased rapidly. In 1999, over 180 local NGOs and 30 international NGOs were believed to operate in Malawi (Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi [CONGOMA] 1999). The majority of these NGOs, especially the local ones, are relatively new and struggling to establish themselves. CONGOMA (2000 p. 2) documents that:

> Most of the NGOs do not understand the economic and social environment in which they operate and do not consider that the communities in which they work are part of a broader system of opposing agendas and interests. ...The staff in these NGOs lack skills in policy analysis and advocacy, information in the form of arguments backed by empirical evidence and access to policy-making arena.

While government recognises the role of NGOs in various development sectors, there is no clear government policy on how it collaborates with NGOs. As noted by members of the NGO-Government Alliance for Basic Education in Malawi,

> Different stakeholders are working in isolation and there is limited sharing of information regarding quality basic education in Malawi, hence duplicating of services, lack of coordinated efforts in influencing government policy and decisions, and inability to pull resources together to meet and achieve quality basic education (Tizora 1999, p. 2).

This situation has led to most NGO development efforts being piecemeal, haphazard, and in most cases reflecting a short term, reactionist approach to development.

While the government's call for participation of the NGOs in providing education at all levels appears to be a noble political commitment, a number of problems are apparent. The first critical issue is that the government neither has any policy[2] in place on how to collaborate with NGOs nor a regulatory framework on the overall NGO intervention in Malawi. Participation involves more than simply attending government-organised workshops. Participation entails partnership of some degree. The low level of NGO participation in policy identification, development and implementation has, to some extent, rendered NGOs ignorant of government development priorities. Second, while a number of basic education programmes are undertaken by various NGOs both in rural and urban areas, documentation of the extent to which they facilitate participation of their beneficiaries in development in general and in basic education in particular, are scarce. Participation, which, according to Feeney (1998 p. 15), implies "influence on development decisions", is a relatively new concept in Malawi and its interpretation and contextualisation may vary. Third, there is little literature on how the NGOs in Malawi mobilise and engage their beneficiaries in the decision-making process of the programmes that directly affect their lives, or on the collaborative mechanisms in NGO-led basic education programmes.

While participation of the various development stakeholders in education poses a challenge to both government and NGOs in particular, another fundamental problem being investigated in this study relates to partnerships as applied to development discourse. Although development in Malawi is currently district-focused, there is a dearth of information on how NGOs collaborate with various partners at the district level and in particular, in the process of implementing basic education programmes.

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[2] At the time of the initiation of this study, debate was underway between CONGOMA and the government to come up with a policy on how the NGO sector in Malawi will collaborate with government on matters related to development. At that time, there was only a Draft Government NGO Policy. However, running in parallel with this issue was an NGO Law, which basically aimed to regulate NGO operation and improve on matters of accountability and transparency. In 2000, the

Because of the nature and composition of the various development committees at the district level,[3] little has been documented on their collaborative mechanisms with NGOs at that level. As noted by Bisika et al. (1995), these local governance structures are crucial to any development initiative not only because it is where the majority of the marginalised people are concentrated but also where local knowledge and understanding of the core problems can be tapped. However, the extent to which NGOs are incorporated in the overall district development interventions and vice versa, remains unknown. As such, knowledge of how NGOs influence the advancement of the development agendas among politicians is vital in the overall understanding of partnership at the micro level.

1.2 Focus of the Study

The study focuses on three NGOs namely, Adolescent Girls Literacy Project (AGLIT), Church of Central African Presbyterial (CCAP) Blantyre Mission-Projects Office, and World Vision Chitera Area Development Programme (ADP) in rural local communities. While the study investigates how NGOs participate in the provision of basic education in Malawi, its emphasis is not merely to review and synthesise the literature theoretically. Rather its focus is to critically examine and understand how each of the NGOs (hereafter referred to as cases) facilitate the participation of its beneficiaries in decision-making on matters related to basic education and, how they develop and sustain partnerships with other stakeholders (local community members, government and other NGOs).

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government ratified the NGO Law but without any proper policy on its working partnerships with NGOs. Currently, there is still no government policy on NGOs except for an NGO Law.

[3] Some of which are: District Development Committees (DDCs), District Executive Committees (DECs), Basic Education Committees (BECs), District Education Offices (DEOs), and Local Education Authorities (LEAs), all of which are dominated by government officials and politicians.

Since the late 1960s, there has been considerable support for the view that development in the Third World has benefited the few and excluded the many (the poor). The means by which this trend would be reversed, it is argued, is through the process of participation (Oakley 1991; Feeney 1998; Jazairy et al. 1991). Likewise, with the current growth and visibility of NGOs in developing countries, it is difficult, if not impossible, for governments and other stakeholders to embark on development activities with complete disdain for these NGOs (Fowler 1997; Smillie 1995). However, there is also a heated debate on the underlying assumptions to effective partnerships (Lister 1999). Hence the major focus of this study is to unravel the complex issues that surround the concepts of participation and partnerships as they relate to basic education programmes in Malawi.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are to:

- critically examine the extent to which NGOs facilitate the participation of their beneficiaries in the identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of basic education programmes in rural communities in Malawi;
- critically examine how NGOs develop and nurture partnerships with other stakeholders in provision of basic education in local communities;
- examine the management strategies employed in delivering NGO basic education programmes and the extent to which the management style(s) promote or hinder participation and partnership building;
- determine challenges that NGOs encounter in the process of facilitating participation and partnership building in basic education;
- assess the impact of beneficiary participation and partnerships on NGO basic education programmes; and,

- make recommendations to the government and the NGO sector on how participation and partnerships can be enhanced in promotion of basic education in Malawi.

In specific terms the study seeks to respond to the following **research questions**:

- To what extent do NGOs engage their beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the processes of identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of basic education programmes?
- How is partnership between NGOs and other NGOs (Inter-NGO); NGOs and government; and NGOs and local community members developed and nurtured to maximise impact and why?
- What management strategies help facilitate or hinder participation and partnership building and why?
- What are the major challenges NGOs encounter in facilitating participation and partnership building in basic education in Malawi?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study is significant in a number of ways. First and foremost, it provides an original in-depth analysis of major development processes in Basic Education in Malawi with reference to NGO contributions. While previous studies focused on understanding institutional needs (USAID 1994; Rogge 1997), this study goes beyond these to document the dynamics of the relationships between participation and partnerships, particularly how the two concepts, which are relatively new in development discourse in Malawi, are put into practice by the three cases.

The findings of this study are also significant in the sense that they may serve as a foundation for greater awareness and better understanding among various development

agencies of their roles in complementing government development policies. The results may be useful in facilitating the development of a more effective and coordinated approach to providing Basic Education in unserved rural areas in Malawi, thereby maximising the potential for greater impact of NGOs on poverty alleviation.

In addition, the study's contribution to an awareness of the appropriateness and/or efficacy of the participatory development paradigm will not only be useful to policy makers, but will also open up a chapter in which different development players will be informed of what it means to empower beneficiaries through active participation in identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of basic education programmes. Bearing in mind the scarcity of resources, the study will provide frameworks that may be applied in maximising efforts by different players in strengthening Basic Education in Malawi. Lastly but not least in importance, the results of the study will add to a pool of existing literature on NGOs in general, but more specifically, the literature on the role of the NGOs in facilitating participatory development in basic education, which is currently scarce.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited in a number of ways. First, it is limited in scope by focusing on three NGOs that are actively involved in the provision of basic education, particularly non-formal education and access (community mobilisation in construction of school infrastructure). The methodology employed in the study does have a significant limitation in the sense that it does not allow greater latitude or casting of the net wider in order to capture other aspects of the NGO practices that would allow for reasonable generalisations to be made. However, by the use of this methodology, it serves the purpose of understanding NGO practices in greater depth.

The study is also limited in the sense that it does not seek to prove or disprove the theoretical underpinning of development. It is rather concerned with understanding the

NGO practices with grassroots communities in their quest to provide various forms of basic education. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the current alternative development theories advanced by Escobar (1995) and Friedmann (1992).

Due to funding and time constraints, the study was limited to a specific geographical location where access to the participating NGOs was relatively easy.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter Two examines and analyses theories of development and the role Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) play in education and development in general. A global perspective of the evolution of NGOs, their comparative advantages and weaknesses, and their role in facilitating participation and partnership building with other stakeholders in education is examined.

Chapter Three highlights, analyses and critiques the education policies of Malawi in relation to issues of NGO participation and partnerships. A critique of the historical background of education and reforms in the economic and political system is presented. I also further analyse and critique the challenges facing the education system in relation to current government policies on education reform in the pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education sectors, with particular emphasis on access, equity, quality, relevance, management, planning, and finance. The chapter further examines the changing role of NGOs in education in Malawi, with an overview of the evolution, nature and degree of their role in facilitating participation and partnership building in Malawi.

Chapter Four is mainly concerned with a systematic presentation of the processes undertaken to collect data, including the methods used and their rationale, but also with how my research plan translated into practice in the field. Chapters Five and Six present and discuss the results based on each case and cross-examine the emerging issues among the cases. Chapter Five examines the results in light of how each NGO facilitates participation of the beneficiaries in identifying, implementing, monitoring and evaluating basic education programmes, while Chapter Six presents an examination of results related to how the three NGOs develop partnerships with other stakeholders in basic education. However, both Chapters Five and Six outline the impact of management style(s) and its effect on participation and partnership building. Also, the chapters critically examine the challenges NGOs encounter in the process of facilitating participation and partnership building.

Chapter Seven is a reflection of the whole research process and provides a summary by critically examining the implications of the emerging results on policy and practice on the one hand, and the way forward on the other. The thesis concludes by drawing close attention to areas that need further research in order to improve provision of basic education in Malawi.

CHAPTER TWO

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs) IN EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

2.0 Introduction

The emergence of new developmental paradigms over the past two decades (Brohman 1996; Burkey 1993; Carmen 1996) has sparked a debate that revolves around the notion of sustainable development, that is, development that is conceived not only as just but also participatory, democratic, people-centred and environmentally friendly. The ubiquity of the concept of sustainable development has also led to the redefinition of the role of the state in addressing national development priorities. As part of the process of sustainable development, the world has also witnessed an unprecedented rise in the number and influence of Non-Governmental Organisations. These NGOs, especially in developing countries, are establishing themselves in alliance with public and private sectors as mediums not only for the delivery of economic and social development, but also as advocates for policy change. The social services provided by some of these NGOs in Malawi include, for instance, education, agriculture and health (Zeidi 1999). However, conflicting debate continues to unfold regarding their (NGOs') claims, especially their effectiveness in facilitating development that is environmentally friendly, participatory and people-centred.

Since much of the literature links NGOs with development issues, this chapter begins with a critical examination of the theories of development, tracing some of the arguments about what development is, what it does, and its effect. An analysis of the new development paradigms is provided and the role of NGOs in the current post-development thinking is examined in light of what NGOs are, and their role in

facilitating participation and partnership building between and among themselves on the one hand, and government and the local communities on the other. The chapter concludes by presenting a global review of NGO practices in the provision of basic education and how they facilitate participation and partnerships in education.

2.1 Theoretical Considerations of the Notion of Development

For decades, the notion of "development" has been a focus of heated debate, more particularly in terms of its effect on those it purports to develop (Burkey 1993; Escobar 1995; Myers 1999). Since the Second World War, there have been efforts to not only define what development is about, but also its viability and effects in relation to poverty alleviation. As a result, there has been a growing scrutiny and re-examination of how the process of development ultimately benefits the intended beneficiaries. Similarly, since NGOs have been at the centre stage of development, the question worth asking is how NGOs facilitate participation and partnership building among other stakeholders.

2.1.1 Deconstructing Development

There are many views about the meaning of development (see for example Simons 1999; Peet & Hartwick 1999; Thomas 2000), which have ultimately resulted in a wide range of nomenclature. The emphasis, however, has been on "well-being for all" humans (Chambers 1997, p. 9) and, as Simons (1999 p. 2) puts it, "enhancing individual and collective quality of life" in an empowering and sustainable way. Martinussen (1997) takes the meaning a little further and argues that development should be viewed as the history of each and every culture in the world. He sees development as "a culturally grounded process where objectives cannot be formulated by outsiders - where North-Western researchers or decision-makers cannot define what is development outside their own cultural sphere" (p. 45). He contends that nobody has

the right to prescribe the meaning except those who live the culture. Martinussen's argument bears some resemblance to Yamamori et al.'s (1996) understanding that effective development entails "development of indigenous cultures and as a process of change rather than a specified level of achievement" (Yamamori et al. 1996, p. 124). Yamamori and his colleagues further maintain that for development to be effective, not only should the beneficiaries "participate", but, they should also be part of the process, with an ultimate goal of achieving "sustainability" (Yamamori et al. 1996, p. 125).

Escobar (1995) differs markedly from Simons (1999), Chambers (1997) and Yamamori et al (1996). Escobar notes that development as a concept was a post-cursor to the Second World War. He views development as "a response to the problematisation of poverty" (p. 44) that occurred during this period, but not a natural process of knowledge leading to the discovery of the problems. According to Escobar (1995), development was a discursive process governed by modernisation thinking and premised on the belief that development was poised to occur if capacity investment was increased. This resulted in the construction of the world of 'haves' and 'have nots'. Those who were perceived as not having the capital investment were branded as underdeveloped (Sachs 1992). These competing views have an origin, to which I now turn.

2.1.2 Theories of Development

The concept of development has been and continues to be dominated by theories and models predominantly derived from Western economic history. The present study does not attempt to study all the theories, but rather focuses on three, that is, 'modernisation', 'dependency' and 'alternative/post-development' theories because of their significance to the issues that underpin my research. The discussion will canvas three aspects of each of them, that is, what these theories say, what their weaknesses are and a snapshot of what the critics say are the alternative ways of thinking about them.

2.1.2.1 Modernisation theories

Modernisation theories of development have occupied the development space and continue in a more subtle form through development agencies that claim to foster and deliver the promises of development. Isbister (1991) observes that modernisation theories mainly "focus upon deficiencies in the poor countries - the absence of democratic institutions, of capital, of technology, of initiative, and then speculate upon ways of repairing these deficiencies" (Isbister 1991, p. 33). Modernisation protagonists view underdeveloped countries as being held back by traditional society, and thus perceived as stagnant and static. Modernisation scholars, Burkey (1993) argues, strongly believe that the cure for this stagnation and backwardness is to embrace the social, cultural and economic systems of the developed countries. Underdeveloped countries have to emulate, more or less every aspect of the Western thinking and 'doing', in order to achieve a growth-based innovation, which is viewed by these developed countries as essential to development in general. According to Isbister (1991), modernisationists see the underdeveloped world achieving optimal development through transforming itself from "tradition to modernity, that is to say, to follow in the footsteps of the new developed countries" (p. 38).

While elements of the developed world continue to try to make the underdeveloped world 'like them', there are important challenges to modernisation theory of development. In the words of Sachs (1992 p.1), one of the 'anti-development' protagonists:

> The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusions and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. But above all, the hopes and desires which made the idea fly, are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete.

Sachs' (1992) observation sums up the picture of not only development but also modernisation theories as claiming to have the solutions of underdevelopment, yet, what development and modernity have done is to collapse virtually all the indigenous

infrastructure that has been an emblem of cohesion and a means of Third World survival. Commenting on the World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995, (on the question of why development should be rejected by the poor) Dani Nabudere (Kleinscmidt 1996, p.1) shares similar sentiments to Sachs and states: "Thus as the issues facing the summit were concerned, the assembled leaders acknowledged that modern development has resulted in poverty, unemployment and disintegration of social structures". Sachs' and Nabudere's views consolidate and resonate with Martinussen's (1997) contention.

Despite the weaknesses of modernisation theories, its protagonists believe that the potential for the poor to live better lives can be achieved through good policies and practice (Isbister 1991; Brohman 1996). Their optimism, which is more tuned to economic growth, is that improved trade and tariff policies, planning techniques, increased agricultural production and pricing policies, use of monetary and fiscal policies, and deployment of appropriate technologies will improve the condition of the underdeveloped countries. However, this view has been challenged by the 'dependency' theorists.

2.1.2.2 Dependency theory of development

The failures of development are but one dimension of the whole process of development. Dependency theory provided perhaps one of the earliest challenges to the myriad assumptions and effects of modernisation thinking. The fundamental principles of dependency theory, which emanated from Latin American economists and social scientists, and is believed to be an outgrowth of Marxism (Isbister 1991), are that growth in some of the rich countries has resulted in the impoverishment of the undeveloped world through internationalisation of capitalism, which progressively began to grow in influence and dominated world trade. The theory critiques and

questions the assumed mutual benefits of countries on the 'periphery' of international trade and those of the 'centre'.

Peet and Hartwick (1999) and Burkey (1993) concur with Isbister (1991), noting that European development was merely based on destruction through colonialism and resource control, ultimately leading to what they call a "Global geography of European First World Centre" and "non-European Third World Periphery" (Peet & Hartwick 1999, p. 107). The centre-periphery dichotomy has since then been used as a means of social, economic and cultural control. The unequal power relationship between the developed and the undeveloped nations has led to the former being more developed and further underdevelopment of the latter. The monopolistic tendencies of the developed nations today explain the rift between the rich and poor countries and has therefore led to the current emergence of notions of 'Third World', 'developing world' 'poor' countries and so on.

While the modernisation school sees the rich countries as having the potential to relieve the suffering of the poor nations, the dependency theorists sees modernisation as the major obstacle to the well-being of the poor. The pro- and anti-capitalist sentiments from the two ideological standpoints also pose a significant challenge to the way they respond to alternative means of mitigating the challenge. One suggestion (Isbister 1991, p. 51) is to "fight fire with fire, to transform capitalism from the enemy of the Third World to its saviour". In other words, the 'Underdeveloped' nations should attempt to mobilise local resources in order to create local industries that challenge those from capitalist North. However, bearing in mind the inequality that may ensue from this approach, others in the dependency school think that while capitalist free enterprise may be the way to go, state control should also be exercised through state – led economic planning and tariff barriers against foreign imports. Burkey (1993), like Isbister (1991) and Narman (1999), also envisages that collective action through their government can

break the cycle of domination. It seems though that neither the modernisationists nor the dependency scholars seem to provide a definitive answer to challenges identified by the two theories. My discussion turns to 'Alternative development' theories.

2.1.2.3 Alternative and Post-Development Theories

The concept of "Alternative Development" from which post-development theory emanates, can be traced as far back as 1960s when one of the British economists, Dudley Seers, first posed three fundamental questions in relation to development:

> The question to ask about a country's development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have become less severe, then beyond doubt there has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, and especially if all the three have, it would be strange to call the results 'development', even if per capita income had soared (Seers 1972, in Martinussen 1997, p. 294).

The philosophical viewpoints of 'alternative development' paradigm and 'post-development theory', and as a result of Seers' critique of development, have, over the past decades, been under heavy scrutiny. Alternative approaches to mainstream development that focuses on economic growth, has proved to be at odds with people's aspirations. According to Pieterse (1996, 2000), alternative development theory has been concerned with redefining the goals of development and introducing alternative practices which for example, include participatory and people-centred development. Pieterse concurs with Friedmann (1992) and Brohman (1996) who also believe in empowerment of development beneficiaries. Their philosophy of alternative development rests on the belief that the rural poor should actively participate in the decision-making of territorially organised communities.

Post-development theory from Escobarian perspective, on the other hand, is a new wave of theoretical position against modernity (Pieterse, 1998, 2000; Escobar, 1995). It is a

total rejection of development from the Western perspective. For Escobar, "development was-and continues to be for the most part, a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of progress" (Escobar 1995, p. 44). Therefore, for Escobar and other 'Alternative development' protagonists such as Friedmann (1992), Brohman (1996) and Rahnema (1997), post-development is a departure from the imposed development practice that disregards local knowledge. It is an ideology, which, according to Rahnema (1997, p. 391) "should not be seen as an end to the search for new possibilities of change... It should only mean that the binary, the mechanistic, the reductionist, the inhumane and the ultimately self-destructive approach to change is over". In other words, post-development theory heralds a new era of inward looking, localisation of knowledge, reflexivity and, space for grassroots engagement in searching for alternatives to mainstream development practices which alienate and degrade peoples knowledge and culture.

Another emerging dimension of the contemporary development discourse is the 'rights-based' development (Sen 1999). Sen argues that "development consists of the removal of various types of 'unfreedoms' that leave people with little choice and little opportunity for exercising their reasoned agency" (Sen 1999, p. xii). This view mirrors Freire's theory in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970) in which he interrogates why people of the so-called Third World, have constantly been denied the rights and privileges accorded to those living in the Western Capitalist nations. Such choices and opportunities can be provided in an atmosphere where not only government but also civil society can remove the 'unfreedoms' referred to by Sen.

However, Friedmann (1992) and Pieterse (2000) warn that alternative development should not be romanticised or utopianised. They recount that while alternative development can be created and sustained in small communities, it should not be in

constant opposition to the state. In other words, while alternative development may focus on a local environment, it should not end there. There has to be continual collaboration with the state otherwise the poor may perpetually remain poor.

Chambers (1995) however, speaking from a poverty alleviation perspective, argues that practitioners of alternative development who seek to ameliorate poverty often lack a reasonable understanding of rural poverty basically because the majority of policy makers and staff live in urban areas. He argues that without proper knowledge, it is practically impossible to deliver alternative development interventions except where local knowledge is tapped and integrated into the whole process, primarily by beneficiaries' participation.

Burkey (1993) shares common views with Chambers but goes a little further, arguing that while action mobilised around local initiatives is a way of enhancing social, economic and political development, conscientisation, local control and cooperative self-reliance are equally important. He believes that meaningful change occurs where field experiences and theoretical knowledge are integrated to help the change agents (government or NGOs) and development workers to position their understanding of poverty and development appropriately. He warns however, that alternative development approaches, like participatory development, can easily be abused by development agencies. In his words, "without first protecting the poor people from different kinds of exploitation, everything poured in runs out" (Burkey 1993, p. 205).

While Burkey (1993) takes the stand for self-reliant participatory development, Friedmann (1992) argues that it is inadequate to be self-reliant, because under normal circumstances, poor people have no control over resources meant to improve their lives. This, he argues, calls for alternative development that removes structural barriers, thus social empowerment is a partial solution. Rather, political empowerment is necessary to

deter extreme exploitation of the poor who usually get co-opted into a programme whose direction has already been decided upon elsewhere. This "inclusive democracy" entails devolution of power from the centre to the periphery where "people ought to play much more prominent roles even at a macro-level, because that is the only way genuine progress and improvement can be attained" (Martinussen 1997, p. 332).

2.1.3 My Theoretical Position

The present study, while acknowledging its limitation to delve into the competing development views in great depth, acknowledges that there is no single theory that may work perfectly towards amelioration of human suffering except where a confluence of a range of theories is reached. The present study draws on two theories, Escobar's (1995) "Alternatives to Development" and Friedman's (1992) "Alternative Development". Escobar and Friedman overlap in their arguments about what a definition of normative development is. Their common platform of people-centred development and the engagement of grassroots organisations are fundamental to effective development, that is, development that embraces the principles of participation and partnerships as its building blocks. My conviction in the choice of these frameworks is not necessarily that the ideological and philosophical positions espoused by Escobar and Friedman represent the final words on the matter, but rather that their point of intersection creates a foundation for a substantive examination of the issues. Participation can improve people's awareness as they engage in decision-making processes that affect them. It also may bring marginalised sections of society into partnership with modern economic, political and social institutions on viable and equitable terms. The discussion now turns to the role of NGOs in facilitating the participation of their beneficiaries and partnership building in education.

2.2 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Despite the expanding profile of NGOs as actors in development, the lack of consensus on how to define and classify them remains a perplexing problem (Charton & May 1995; Smillie 1995). Aside from the name Non-Governmental Organisation, which is negative rather than positive, the problem encountered in identifying a workable definition is due to a lack of consistency in the usage of the term (Vakil 1997). The interchanging of the term NGO with other terms such as voluntary organisations (VOs), charitable organisations (COs), grassroots organisations (GOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), independent organisations (IOs), private voluntary organisations (PVOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and private organisations (POs), constitutes part of the problem (Elu & Banya 1999; Lewis 2001).

For the purposes of this study, I shall attempt to define what NGOs are from a number of definitions that illuminate the central focus of the term. Feld and Jordan (1983 p. 227) define an NGO as "any organisation which is not established by a government or a group of governments". Thus, the definition may include such organisations as political groups, labour and trade unions, religious bodies and institutions, guilds, sports clubs, arts and cultural societies, trade associations, chambers of commerce, and professional associations, as well as small and large business firms. However, despite its inclusiveness, this definition creates some problems because of the diverse nature of the organisations encapsulated in it.

In a similar vein, the World Bank (1997) defines an NGO as "an association, society, foundation, charitable trust, non-profit corporation, or other judicial persons that is not regarded under the particular legal system as part of the governmental sector and that is not operated for profit" (p. 2). A more succinct definition is provided by Ball and Dunn (1995) whose view of NGOs they are:

> organisations which are not serving the self-interests of members, but are concerned in one way or another with disadvantage and/or disadvantaged, or with concerns and issues which are detrimental to the well-being, circumstances or prospects of people or society as a whole (p. 20).

From the definitions provided above, it can be noted that there are fundamental characteristics that underpin the meaning of the term. Based on the summary by Ball and Dunn (1995, p. 19) and the United Nations (1992, pp. 34-36), I define NGOs as:

- **Voluntary,** that is, they are formed with a spirit of voluntarism by the board members and even the beneficiaries.
- **Independent,** that is, within the laws of the society, they are controlled by those who formed them, or by the board of management to which such people have delegated, or are required by law to delegate, responsibility for control and management.
- **Not-for-profit,** that is, they are not for private profit or gain, although NGOs may have employees like any other enterprises who are paid for what they do. However, the employers, who in this case are the board members, are not paid for what they do.
- **Not self-serving in aims and related values,** that is, the work of the NGOs is purely for serving the disadvantaged people, especially those that are marginalised for social, political and economic reasons.

2.3 An Historical and Global Perspective of NGO Evolution

The appreciation of the role of NGOs as potential entities in development and relief circles was very minimal in the 1970s (Turner and Hulme, 1997). Their evolution can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages although they became more prominent towards the end of the nineteenth century, when many of these NGOs were actively engaged in

care and welfare issues (Willets 1996; Lewis 2001). Thomas and Allen (2000, p. 210) also observe that:

> Development NGOs mostly began as charitable organisations, often running very localised projects, and are often evaluated against goals such as their direct impact on rural poverty. It is relatively recently that such NGOs have broadened their activities to include attempts at policy influence or advocacy at both international and national levels.

However, going back to the notion of "care and welfare", theorists in this particular field (Korten 1990; Seary, 1996; Willets 1996) argue that such work led to the promotion of organisations by middle class and wealthy categories of people who promoted and provided relief and welfare to the marginalised people.

However, NGOs' sustained involvement in relief and development work, first in the North (Europe) and eventually in the developing world, is essentially a post-World War Two phenomenon (Willets 1996). Most of the large NGOs were formed in the wake of the two World Wars for the purposes of contributing to the reconstruction of war-ravaged Europe. After the reconstruction of Europe and the advent of political independence in most of the developing world, especially African and Asian countries in the 1950s and 1960s, these organisations shifted their focus to development work. Ndengwa (1996) notes that despite that shift in focus, most of the NGOs remained peripheral actors in development during the 1970s and 1980s. However, Bratton (1989) and Fowler (1988) notice that the overwhelming involvement of the NGOs in development, and their institutional expansion, was more pronounced in the mid-1980s. This unprecedented growth was indicative of the emerging realisation that some states were a stumbling block to development because of their lack of transparency and accountability. As a result of the expansion, NGOs' contribution to social, economic and political development in the developing world has since received recognition (Ndengwa 1996; Riddell & Robinson 1995; Thomas & Allen 2000; Turner & Hulme

1997), particularly on the grounds that NGOs have a comparative advantage over the state in serving the poor, an issue that I now turn to examine in detail.

2.4 NGO Comparative Advantages: Rhetoric or Reality?

The general consensus on the difficulty of defining NGOs which I noted in section 2.2 is a strong testimony of how heterogeneous NGOs are. This heterogeneity extends to their development work in terms of their value orientation, size, traditions and their partnerships with the state. Others are unique in their operational mechanisms and influence, and their basis on national, regional or international ideologies.

Despite all the rhetoric however, the centre of debate has been the NGO comparative advantage in relation to the state. The argument justifying the role of NGOs has been based on their flexibility, creativity and cost-effectiveness, and their ability to mobilise volunteers (Drabo & Yahie in Bamberger, 1996). The major question whose answers remain elusive is about how effective NGOs are as agents of service provision within the development arena.

Tendler (1982) (quoted in Tvedt 1998, p. 129) outlines some of the advantages NGOs have over the state, in development issues, and argues that NGOs claim to be better at reaching the poor, that is, targeting their assistance on the chosen groups but also obtaining true meaningful participation of the intended beneficiaries. Tendler further observes that not only do NGOs achieve correct relationship between the development process and outcomes but also strive to work with the people and thus choosing the correct form of assistance for them, that is, not being dominated by resources on the basis of the relationship. She also applauds NGOs as being flexible and responsive in their (NGO) work, working with and strengthening local institutions and, achieving outcomes at less cost.

While Tendler (1982) and Van der Heijden (1986) resonate on the issue of NGO comparative advantage, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) (2000, p.95) slightly differs. Drawing from a number of impact studies, it challenges the notions of 'reaching the poor' and 'alleviating their poverty'. It argues that while there is a significant attempt to reach the poor, the fact remains that the poorest are hardly ever reached. If at all, it is perhaps in very small numbers. As noted by Moore and Putzel (1999), underdevelopment is heavily entrenched in rural areas where "communication and travel are difficult [and] information is scarce" (p. 10). UNRISD (2000) further questions the authenticity of some of the claims as to whether they are empirically validated. It however endorses the view that where NGOs have developed reasonable expertise, their technical capacity is described as better with relative cost-effectiveness.

Van der Heijden (1986, pp. 6-7, quoted in Riddell and Robinson 1995) also concurs with Tendler (1982). He identifies some similar features as unique to NGOs in comparison with the state or government. He notes that NGOs' comparative advantages are:

> their ability to deliver emergency relief, development services at low cost to many people and in remote areas; their rapid and innovative and flexible responses to emerging financial and technical assistance needs at the grassroots level; their long-standing familiarity with the social sector development and poverty alleviation; their experience with small-scale development projects as well as with those requiring a high degree of involvement by, and familiarity with, the concerned target groups (p. 36).

While there is indeed a debate on NGOs' perceived efficiency and effectiveness in reaching the poor (World Bank 1999; Fowler 1997; OECD 1988), there has also been a mixed reaction to these assertions, precipitating a number of questions of which one is the extent to which NGOs facilitate the fundamental principles of alternative development, that is, participation and partnership building with the beneficiaries. Furthermore, it has to be noted that from these "articles of faith", as Riddell and

Robinson (1995) call them, one fundamental point emerges, that is, the proximity which NGOs have with their beneficiaries. For the purposes of this study, emphasis is put on how NGOs reach the poor or how the poor reach the NGOs. In essence, the discussion proceeds with one underlying question, that is, how is an NGO's process of reaching the poor executed? Who initiates this process, to whose benefit? Is it a free (voluntary) or a coercive process? I now examine the counter-comparative advantages of NGOs.

One of the highly discussed issues which challenges NGOs' claims, is their lack of attention to evaluation. In order to be effective, development has to be knowledge-based. Knowing not only what works and why but how that can be employed in development, is an essential component to success. Evidence suggests that until recently, there has been little demand for evaluation among those who support the work of development NGOs (Riddell & Robinson 1995 p. 47). The former British Minister for Overseas Development Assistance, Baroness Chalker, observes:

> Not all NGOs are in fact good at grassroots development. Not all NGOs are cost-effective. Some spend a great deal on glossy public relations and awards which have little to do with the needs of the poor. And there are, I fear, rather too many who are readier to be unhelpfully critical of each other ...than to look at their own failings (in Riddell & Robinson 1995, p. 49).

As noted by Cracknell (2000), one of the major challenges NGOs encounter in their evaluation processes is the fact that "their aid programmes are like an intricate mosaic of very small projects that (unlike most mosaics) do not always comprise any obvious pattern" (p. 281). While the nature of the projects may create room for participatory monitoring and evaluation, their limitations in terms of capacity, resource base and technical know-how are daunting. With a lack of clearly defined objectives and mission, let alone criteria for measuring success, evaluation is difficult. This situation has led to many NGO projects being evaluated by external consultants or, where the NGOs have employed their own staff, the results have lacked publicity about their weaknesses or

failures for fear that the organisation may not be able to secure more funding from the donor agencies (Marsden et al. 1994; Rifkin & Pridmore 2001; Fowler 1997).

While some NGOs promote themselves as able to reach the poor quickly, effectively and efficiently, as is the case with relief and aid work, the centre of contention in this particular discourse is how authentic these claims are, particularly in the development sector, where development as such is rarely speedy or simple. Effectiveness and efficiency in human development is not as "nearly as straightforward as building of dams, roads and bridges" (Smillie 1995, p. 158). Emerging literature seems to challenge the authenticity of NGO claims as merely fundraising slogans. A synthesis of research (UNRISD 2000; UNDP 1993; DANIDA/CASA 1989; Muir 1992; Nyamugasira 1999; White 1996; UNESCO 2000) indicates some degree of ambivalence about the extent to which NGO claims are verified and verifiable.

Furthermore, the claims that NGOs are good at reaching the poor is quite a controversial issue. There is a difference between reaching the poor and doing something about their poverty. The impacts accruing from NGO intervention, not only in education, but other sectors too, are often problematic. As Nyamugasira (1999) argues:

> Many Southern NGOs do not qualify as 'indigenous' in that they are not born out of the situation in which the poor live. Rather, they are modelled on the Northern NGOs who found and/or fund them, often with strings attached. Consequently, they feel accountable more to the North than to the local poor, whose values and aspirations it is hard to prove that they represent (p. 109).

It may be that many NGOs just use the term 'poverty alleviation' as a buzzword, while in practice they are virtually entangled in donors' neo-liberal or market-oriented development style whose vision is subsumed in liberal capitalism and individual entrepreneurship.

Another compelling and equally contentious piece of evidence about NGO limitations is coverage of NGOs programmes (Hulme & Edwards 1997; Lewis 2001). At various levels, NGO activities have suffered from lack of publicity through well documented reports (Rifkin & Pridmore 2001). Lack of proper coordination between and among NGOs on the one hand, and NGOs and other development partners on the other, leave them lacking knowledge base upon which could help make informed decision about resource allocation. This usually leads to patchy and piecemeal intervention (Fowler 2000a).

2.5 NGO Management

In discussing NGO comparative advantages, it was noted (see Utting 1994; Riddell & Robinson 1995) that one of their weaknesses is poor management skills. This section critically examines the concept and practice of "participatory management" from the perspective of NGOs. While the discussion is generic, its relevance to basic education cannot be overemphasised.

Berry (1999) argues that while literature on the role of NGOs in development has focused on policy issues and NGO partnerships with states, donors and local communities (Lewis 1998), literature that critiques the theme of NGO management is scarce. Barry decries this inattention to NGO management and believes that it is not only striking but also challenging that management is such an important component to NGO success, considering that NGOs have to manage both external and internal issues. Internally, NGO management issues may include but not be limited to, strategic planning, budgeting, staffing, governing structures of the organisation, growth and organisational change. From the external viewpoint, NGOs also face a complex array of issues such as how to manage external relationships (to be discussed in section 2.7) with the state, private sector, other NGOs, and their intended beneficiaries.

Echoing Berry's (1999) observations, Sheehan (1998, p. 4) contends that "despite the assumed tradition of participation in the management of NGOs, and the increasing popularity of 'participatory management' as management style for NGOs, relatively little has been written on the subject". As with the concept of participation, participatory management is also loaded with rhetoric. The over-dependence of many NGOs on donor agencies, and the growing recognition of NGOs as conduits for bilateral and multilateral aid, puts pressure on NGOs to be accountable to their donors. This vertical relationship between NGOs and donors calls for NGOs not only to professionalise their management styles (Korten 1990; Smillie 1995) but also to develop a culture of responsive management to their beneficiaries. The question that may be asked however concerns what model or models NGO use in the design and development of their organisation. While there is no particular consensus on the debate, Campbell (1987) outlines four perspectives, three of which require a distinctive management style.

The first of the four styles argues that since NGOs are voluntary organisations, their management styles should draw from voluntary sector principles (Bills & MacKeith 1993). The second perspective is about the contexts in which NGOs work. Proponents of this particular view (Korten 1990; Campbell 1987; Fowler 1989) argue that NGO management should be dictated by the changing contexts in which they (NGOs) find themselves. The third perspective is culturally laden. Protagonists of this management style maintain that the cultural milieu in which NGOs operate should determine the management style (Marsden 1994; Zadec & Szabo 1994). These diverging views consolidate the earlier assertion that the debate about NGO management style remains a contentious issue and is inconclusive.

Dichter (1989), for instance, argues that whether it is an NGO or a commercial organisation, the management principles remain the same irrespective of the nature or function of the organisation. For NGOs, it may be that their primary concern is to

ensure that their organisation is functioning in accordance with the mission. While the nature of the development task may shape the NGO management style, Dichter (1989) argues that it is oversimplistic to suggest that NGOs should or must adopt a particular management style. However, Chambers (1995) while not entirely in agreement with Dichter, believes that participatory management is an important tool for NGOs in development because the practice is in line with the philosophical viewpoints of the 'bottom-up' development approach which is about empowerment (ActionAid 1994; Ajulu 2001; Carroll 1992). Many development researchers (see Eyben 1994; Roche 1992; Burkey 1993; Lewis 2001; Edwards et al 1999) concur with Chambers (1995). They believe that NGOs not only need to reassess their management styles but also critically examine other variables within their management, for example, openness, confidence and trust. These competing views underscore the difficulty of not only the management aspect but also the participatory component which I now discuss.

2.6 Participation in Development

'Participation' as a concept inextricably linked to development, has a long history. Carmen (1996) notes that 'participation in development' evolved in the 1960s when the World Bank, USAID and other similar agencies were forced to relaunch their development strategies in the wake of persistent failures of orthodox and linear development. As I noted earlier, Sachs (1992), Escobar (1995) and Rahnema (1997) argue that the failure of development in general, has resulted in a critical examination of 'alternative' means. Participation has come to be one of the key concepts governing the 'Alternative Development' paradigm and 'Post-Development' theory. However, while the notion has been and seems to be romanticised, there are myriad questions surrounding its applicability and practicability in various contexts. Not only has the concept been given multiple meanings, but also multiple methods of implementation.

2.6.1 Meanings of Participation

To claim that this study emerges with a clear meaning of the term "participation" is rather overambitious. Nonetheless, an attempt to weave a tapestry of meanings may help draw out some fundamental principles governing the concept. A "Preface" to Feeney's (1998) *Accountable aid: Local participation in major development* outlines a number of definitions and views of the concept of participation. Two of these views, one from the International Development Bank and the other from Oxfam are provided below because of their succinct articulation of the fundamental principles underpinning the concept.

According to the International Development Bank (IDB):

> Participation in development is both a way of doing development - a process - and an end in itself. As a process, it is based on the notion that individuals and communities must be involved in decisions and programmes that affect their lives. As an end, participation in development means the empowerment of individuals and communities. It means increased self-reliance and sustainability (Feeney 1998, p.7).

Likewise, Oxfam's views on participation bear resemblance to IDB's and maintain that:

> Participation is a fundamental right. It is a means of engaging poor people in joint analysis and development of priorities. Its ultimate goal should be to foster the existing capacities of local, poor women and men and to increase their self-reliance in ways that outlast specific projects. The purpose of participation is to give a permanent voice to poor or marginalised people and integrate them into the decision-making structures and processes that shape their lives (Feeney 1998, p. 8).

From the two definitions, a number of fundamental principles governing the notion can be drawn. First it is clear from these definitions that development belongs to communities, and as such, local participation is demanded as an acknowledgment of the fact that the communities have the right to participation. Secondly, participation is about empowerment, giving a voice in decision-making processes on a permanent base rather

than temporarily. Thirdly, participation is about self-reliance (an observation which Burkey (1993) alludes to) and its ultimate aim is to enhance the well-being of the poor (Chambers (1997). Michael Bopp (1994, p. 24) succinctly validates this point when he argues that:

> The proposed beneficiaries of development must be active participants in all aspects of the processes that are intended to improve their lives as well as those intended to transform the contexts and conditions within which they must live, and upon which their well-being depends.

Echoing this assertion is Article 2 of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and the "Declaration on the Right to Development" adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1986, whose proclamation, in part, reads "... human persons (should be) the central subject of development" (UNESCO 2000, p. 85). In other words, the people to be affected by development intervention must be the subjects, and not the objects, of the process. It is within this context that Harper (1997, p. 776) notes the complexity of participation in policy design as important in his argument that "understanding how people organise themselves, what their needs are, how policies will impact on populations and what linkages are required...are key to the success".

However, questions linger regarding, for example, how the beneficiaries can be fully engaged as subjects, rather than the objects of the development process. The same is also true of how to involve the beneficiaries, not only in the social, economic and cultural aspects of development, but the political processes that affect their lives. For instance, Brohman (1996), Uphoff (1996 in Myers 1999), and Cooke and Kothari (2001) observe that a number of evaluations in relation to the concept of participation have produced less convincing results. Based on four fundamental questions, Brohman (1996) acknowledges how complex the concept is, because, in his own words:

> Questions often remain over who participates (e.g., just an elite group or broader range of people), what they participate in (e.g., a more limited or broader range of decision-making), how they participate (e.g., as benefit recipients or project designers), and for what reason they participate (e.g. as a means towards other objectives or an end in itself) (p. 251).

Fowler (2000c) provides another dimension of participation. He envisages that participation is meaningful if it is well targeted, that is, "reaching the appropriate gender, cultural, or socio-economic group" (p. 22). He continues to argue that depth, breadth and timing are fundamental ingredients to successful participation. He envisages depth as "a measure of stakeholders' influence on decision making. Breadth is a measure of the range of stakeholders involved. Timing relates to the stage of the process at which different stakeholders are engaged" (p. 22). The manner in which these factors interact matter markedly.

A more comprehensive analysis of the principles underpinning participation in development is provided by Voorhies (1996, pp. 129-135). In essence, he argues that participation is meaningful when the projects in which the beneficiaries participate are relatively small. With an analysis of stories from the local community members' experiences, information can be generated to inform not only how participation can be enhanced but also on how capable the beneficiaries are, and how ready they are for the programmes. He sees this process as a means of not only empowering local communities and encouraging them to invest but also as a strategy of capacity building and empowerment, where the communities learn from their own mistakes and discover means and ways of dealing with the challenges that may occur in the process. The communities learn to communicate and establish partnerships and also establish a feeling that they own the projects. Voorhies' views on this strategy consolidate the argument that development can only be productive when those believed to be developed cease to be objects of the process but become subjects. I now turn to a discussion of how NGOs can facilitate this process.

2.6.2 NGOs as Facilitators of Participatory Development and Empowerment

The 1980s and the 1990s saw a dramatic increase in support for NGO development initiatives in local and community-based settings. Their comparative advantages (Bebbington & Farrington 1993; Tendler 1982; Tvedt 1998; Vivian 1994) are believed to enable them to contribute, substantially, to the contemporary vision of 'Alternative[s] [to] development' through participatory development, innovative methods, institutional organisations and project implementation (Brohman, 1996).

Whether or not the concept of participation can be or has been fully embraced by development NGOs as their mainstream instrument is a question of debate. White (1995, in Lewis, 2001) notes that the politics of participation concerning who participates, what they participate in, how they participate and for what reason, may depend on the forms of participation. The first of these forms is *nominal* where, for instance, government-formed organisations legitimise their existence through the engagement of some membership, yet the members hardly participate in the decision-making of the organisation, except in what Lewis (2001) calls a "tokenistic display" (p.118). In some instances, participation has been used as source of cheap labour. Projects initiated by outsiders or external agencies have resulted is cost sharing or "local counterpart funds" where the local communities are required to do some work, like helping to mould bricks, build classrooms etc, but without any wages. Participation in this case becomes *instrumental.* Still this does not involve participants in the decision-making process, rather they are being used as objects of the process. *Representative* participation differs markedly from the first two forms. In this category, the participants gain some degree of influence on the projects or programmes through being part of the planning committees, and have a considerable proximity to the decision-making process but not quite in total control. The fourth form of participation is *transformative* (see Myers 1999 and Yamamori et al 1996). According to Lewis

(2001, p. 118), in 'transformative' participation, "people find ways to make decisions and take action, without outsider involvement and on their own terms". White (2000) regards this form of participation as highly empowering as it stems from below and is endogenous. Outsiders can only play a facilitative and non-paternalistic role.

In whatever category (as outlined above) NGOs may find themselves, there is a paradox requiring urgent attention. On the one hand, NGOs usually have their own agendas, missions and visions dictated mostly by their funding base. On the other hand however, participation, as Voorhies (1996) noted, should start with the situation and priorities of the beneficiaries themselves. I now turn to discuss what strategies NGOs employ to maximise the participation of their beneficiaries.

Fowler (1997 & 2000c) provides comprehensive measures which are fundamental to the success of the facilitative role NGOs play in promoting alternative(s) (to) development. He envisages that it is important to build collective consensus based on shared mission through a process where the NGOs concerned and the communities learn from each other's concerns and their limitations. Not only does this strategy create a platform for sharing visions and principles, but it also dispels the cynicism attached to the concept of participation as a tyranny (Cooke & Kothari 2001), as neo-colonialism or a means of social control and coercive persuasion (Cooke 2001; Hailey 2001; Craig & Porter 1997).

Fowler (2000c) further argues that the stakeholders should clarify each other's roles and responsibilities. He envisages this as a mechanism that helps to foster transparency and creates a spirit of mutual trust which is conducive to participation. Another important aspect Fowler advocates is what Edwards (2002) refers to as "learning organisations" (p.331), that is, NGO staff being open to learning the context within which they operate. According to Edwards (2002), NGOs operate in environments that

are always dynamic. As such, both NGO staff and their intended beneficiaries, Edwards argues, should continuously and mutually create an atmosphere of critiquing and seeking alternative means of improving participation. Both NGOs and the communities should share information about who is doing what and where and through the spirit of partnership, be able to share the challenges. Furthermore, Fowler (1997; 2000c) drawing from his field experiences argues that not only should NGOs establish linkages and coordination with other stakeholders while safeguarding organisational values and identity, but should also encourage joint monitoring and evaluation in order to establish joint accountability and transparency.

Fowler's (1997; 2000c) and Edwards' (2002) sentiments sound idealistic, and Hailey (2000) warns that participation is not a linear process. In their analysis of their experiences in working with NGOs, Joseph (2001) and Shepherd (1998) observe that the success stories of how NGOs have thrived in the region have depended on their understanding of the various local settings and contexts, and the manner in which they have responded to local needs. They claim that a process of informal personal engagement with the local people has proved to be effective in promoting participatory development. Checkoway (1995) further warns that some development agencies use participation solely for administrative reasons without due consideration of power transfer. He observes that often times these agencies may use nominal, instrumental or representative participation in order to provide public relations or to diffuse antagonistic protests, and as a way of legitimising decisions made elsewhere.

Citing his own studies (Checkoway 1982, 1984) Checkoway (1995, p. 10) concludes, "Some agencies favour participation that is not disruptive of programme management, and oppose participation that results in citizen control over key aspects of programmes. They, thus favour 'safe' methods that provide information without transfer of power to the community". These views reflect similar warnings regarding power imbalances

commonly found in the process of participation. For example Woost (1997) and Nyamwaya (1997) draw on their experiences in Sri Lanka and Kenya respectively and conclude that despite the rhetoric about participation and empowerment, there are limits to people's participation, and in many cases development is still top-down. Development, Nyamwaya (1997) argues, "does not give them the power to define development for themselves. ...Development is still effected in a top-down manner, and there is always the implicit assumption communities can only develop once they have assimilated specialised technical and material inputs from the outside" (Nyamwaya 1997, cited in Grillo 1997, p. 9).

2.7 Collaborative Partnerships among Development Stakeholders

The change in the nature, size, value, mission and objectives of many development organisations, both from the North and the South, especially with regard to development and aid, has resulted in the adoption of the concept of partnership (Tennyson, et al 1994 in Fowler 2000a; Bendell 1998). The preceding analysis of the meanings of the concept of "participation", shows that participation and "partnership" are inextricably linked (see Fowler 2000a). Like the concept of participation, "partnership" has, since the 1970s, not only been widely used but has also been given multiple meanings (Fowler 1991).

2.7.1 The Meanings of Partnership

The term "partnership" is often synonymously used with the term of "relationship". Lewis (2001) observes that the term is used interchangeably with such terms as 'collaboration', 'coordination', 'cooperation', 'accompaniment', and 'complementarity', which he says have entrenched themselves in development discourse. Originally, the concept of partnership was used and understood to reflect humanitarian, moral, political, ideological or spiritual solidarity between the Northern

NGOs and those from the South, who also shared a common vision namely facilitating social change.

In its basic form, the term "partnership" means a strategic alliance or coalition between two or more entities that are involved in pursuing a particular issue but share resources and responsibilities in order to achieve a common goal (Caledon Institute of Social Policy 1998; Fowler 1997). Fowler (2000b) further extends this definition from the perspective of whether such partnerships are authentic or not. He argues that "authentic partnership implies ... a joint commitment to long-term intervention, shared responsibility for achievement, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power" (quoted in Brehm 2001, p.11).

Lewis (2001) critiques the absence of proper scrutiny of how the concept of partnership works in the development and aid arena. He notices that the lack of proper balanced partnerships has resulted in a complex dichotomy, where those involved can become *active* or *passive* partners. As Fowler (2000a) argues, "the phrase 'partnership in development' has become virtually meaningless and discredited because too often it camouflages aid-related relationships that are unbalanced, dependency-creating and based on compromise in favour of the powerful" (p. 26). For example, Fowler observes that the 'dependency' and 'power imbalance' can be exacerbated among other things, by donors imposing conditionality that undermines NGOs' governance, accountability, comparative advantages, organisational behaviour and focus.

Before I move on to talk about the various types of partnerships, it is important to note, from the two definitions above, the fundamental ingredients of an effective partnership. Whether these partnerships are in form of coalitions, alliances, or networks, Fowler (1997) and Lewis (2001) argue that effective partnerships or relationships have to be founded on, first and foremost, mutuality. They also argue that where those involved in

the partnership deal have an important part to play as equals while maintaining their organisational independence. In addition, there have to be clearly defined goals, expectations, rights and responsibilities, equitable distribution of costs and benefits, performance indicators and mechanisms to measure and monitor performance. Murphy (1991) argues that while the concerned parties maintain mutual support, constructive advocacy has to be heeded. All these have to be considered while ensuring that negotiations between the parties involved do not create tension or misunderstanding. Both Fowler (1997, 2002) and Lewis (2001) maintain that development partners should be accountable and transparent. The development partners should ultimately be responsible and accountable to the grassroots organisations or members of the community, rather than, as Brehm (2001) puts it, "skew accountability Northwards" (p. 14). Lastly, effective partnerships have to be founded on common interest and shared objectives (Malhotra 1997; Mohiddini 1999) without one member imposing on or subjugating the other on the basis of having greater control of resources.

2.7.2 Types of Partnerships

The challenge NGOs involved in development confront is that they have to choose which stakeholders to partner with in order to ensure that their mission and objectives are realised. This situation creates two scenarios. Fowler (1997, 2002) and Edwards and Hulme (1996) observe, that to be successful, NGOs have to develop and maintain three types of partnerships. Since NGOs' primary beneficiaries (the local community members) are in a public domain, predominantly under the control of the regime of the day, NGOs have to establish partnerships with governments of the day in order to have access to the various constituencies. Under the current dwindling resource base, NGOs need to develop and maintain a reasonable degree of partnerships with other development partners, like International NGOs (INGOs), whether they are from the North or South. Having established coherent links with the two entities, NGOs can move on to the next step, that is, to establish partnerships with local communities as

their "primary beneficiaries". I now turn to discuss these types of partnerships. The emphasis is on NGO-Government, Inter-NGO, and NGO-Local Community partnerships.

2.7.2.1 Government and NGO Partnerships

One of the fundamental aspects of NGOs successes in their development endeavours in general, and in effectively and efficiently dealing with poverty, is their relationship with the state. This is probably one of the most controversial topics debated in the NGO literature. The rapid burgeoning of the NGO sector, in some instances, poses a dilemma to the state too, as the NGOs diversify their scope of operation to encapsulate virtually every aspect of human needs. This aspect raises concern about their exact role. The form of relationships among various development partners that best facilitate sustainable development is a complex issue. Changes in NGOs' work, and in the political, economic, social and institutional environments in which they operate, can determine the nature and extent of the relationship which NGOs have, not only with the state or government, but also with other development partners. To begin with, let me analyse the type of government-NGO relationships that some development protagonists believe exist.

Gidron et al. (1992) suggest that there are four types of government - NGO relations. This typology demonstrates the complexities of the various partnerships. In the *Government Dominant Model,* not only does the government play a dominant role in both the financing and delivery of services but also uses the taxpayers money to fund various services which are ultimately delivered by the government employees.

In the *Third Sector Dominant Model* the voluntary organisations, or NGOs, play a dominant role in both the financing and delivery of services. This model prevails where

"opposition to government involvement in social welfare provision is strong for either ideological or sectarian reasons, or where the need for such services has not been widely accepted" (Gidron et al. 1992, cited in Tvedt 1998, p. 95). In essence, the NGOs in this model are an instrument of suppressing government malpractice.

As opposed to the two models above, the NGOs in a *Dual Model,* also known as "parallel track" model (Tvedt 1998, p. 5) supplement the services provided by the state and deliver similar kinds of services. One distinguishing strategy is clear however. In a "dual model", NGOs give priority to the communities that are marginalised by state service provision. Their (NGOs) primary role therefore, is to fill the gaps left by the government.

One of the most conducive models, and perhaps one that strikes a balance, is the *Collaborative Model.* This is a model which allows for the two sectors (government and NGOs) to work together. In this model, NGOs can act as agents of government programmes (Collaborative-vendor model) or alternatively, they (NGOs) can retain a considerable amount of autonomy and direction (Collaborative partnership model) (Tvedt 1998, pp. 95-96).

However, as can be deduced from the four models above, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint which model can work best, and of course where. The framework of relationships within which NGOs operate may vary from country to country. It is possible that a single model or a combination of two models or more can be adopted. As alluded to earlier, it may depend upon the prevailing social, political, economic and cultural climate of the day. Nevertheless there are fundamental issues that underpin government - NGO relations.

Precisely because governments and NGOs are organised differently and use contrasting approaches to development issues, they are likely, at times, to come into conflict. In a continent as diverse as Africa, government - NGO relations may vary with place and time. To begin with, looking at the government side, states with civilian constitutions, which provide for freedom of association, are more likely to be able to tolerate and create space for NGO activities than those with military regimes. Likewise, states with multi-party political systems of government would probably be more hospitable to NGOs and the civil society in general than would single party states.

While this study does not intend to investigate the effect of type of government on NGO work, it has to be noted that the two seemingly normative assumptions mentioned in the preceding paragraph may not be workable. The situation may be dictated by a number of circumstances. At best, both governments and NGOs have the onus of safeguarding mutual trust. For example, there is an emerging trend in many developing countries to formulate codes of conduct (see Bennett 1997) which help those in partnerships to adhere to a particular standard of operation. Although this is a controversial issue among NGOs who view this as limiting their freedom, it is one of the potential areas that can facilitate government-NGO partnerships. Smillie (1995) takes the issue further and recommends that:

> Government can influence the climate for NGOs in a variety of formal and informal ways. On the informal side, government can foster what has become known as 'enabling environment' collaboration, consultation, assistance in coordination, and by sending positive messages to the media and to the public that NGOs have a beneficial and welcome role to play in development (p. 74).

Smillie (1995, p. 74) also argues for the formalisation of the relationships through the creation of appropriate legal, regulatory and fiscal frameworks. However, as I mentioned earlier, these may not be an end in creating an enabling environment. Partnership between and among a wide range of actors with a distinctive input may be an important

tool. As noted by Hulme and Edwards (1997, p. 47), "a healthy relationship is only conceivable where both parties share a common objective". As I emphasised in sub-section 3.4.1, sharing common objectives means planning together, sharing information, resources, technical and professional expertise in order to maximise impact. This is where NGO - Government collaboration becomes crucial because a certain degree of tolerance, understanding and commitment has to be embraced by both the NGOs and government as building blocks to sustain the operationalisation of enabling environment. In such instances, it is equally critical to analyse what role NGOs play in facilitating government-NGO relations.

Furthermore, one of the most critical areas affecting NGOs' strength, which in turn affects their relations with the government is lack of coordination among themselves (NGO-NGO Relationship/Collaboration). For example, Ball and Dunn (1995) observe that "some NGOs are often too secretive about their work and do not want to share their findings, views and ideas" (p. 45). I have seen from personal experience in Malawi. This problem, in most cases, has resulted in duplication of efforts and implementing programmes that are not a priority of the government. In a resource-scarce environment, this can be frustrating on the government side and can create tension between the parties or partners in development. Bennet (1997) argues that whatever the case is, NGOs can benefit from their partnerships with the state if they are seen to consolidate statehood as opposed to disintegrating and/or undermining the state authority. In other words, NGOs should not in any way use the shifting political arenas as weaponry to undermine the governance of the day.

Although it is beyond the scope of this piece of research to exhaust all the issues, it has to be noted that because NGO activities can involve a wide range of sensitive political actors, for instance, donors in the international arena and neighbouring countries in the region, a government may even come to view the NGOs through the lens of state

security. Where leaders are confident of their grip on power, they may not fear a populace mobilised in autonomous organisations. The more fragile a government's sense of political legitimacy, the less permissive it is likely to be towards institutionalisation of a strong NGO sector. Thus the amount of space allowed for the NGOs in any given country may be determined first and foremost by political considerations, rather than by calculation of the contribution of NGOs to economic and social development (Bratton 1985).

However, the Government-NGO relationship cannot go without questions. The critical question to be asked is: what implication does a mutual relation between the government and NGOs have on the latter? One argument that has emerged in the NGO community is the fear of loss of identity as NGOs collaborate with the government. Collins (2000) expresses this fear when he observes that:

> Where many NGOs kept their distance from government and private sectors, now there is recognition that they must work alongside both government and private sector. ...NGOs and their leaders face a challenge - perhaps a quandary - that will profoundly affect the nature of their organisation, their tasks and their *modus operandi:* can they maintain autonomy whilst continuing to play a central role in development? (p. 6).

In many cases, governments are embarking on decentralisation of public services with the hope of facilitating participatory development by various development stakeholders at the grassroots level. While the vision may sound noble, it still remains a challenging task for both the government and NGOs to form partnerships that can really work. Will the partnership be free from political manipulation? This study strives to unravel some of these dynamics.

2.7.2.2 Inter-NGO Partnership

Partnerships between and among NGOs vary. In some instances, they can take the form of temporary alliances, coalitions or simple platforms (Fowler 2000b). Some inter-NGO partnerships can be formal and legally established. One such example is NGO partnerships formed under umbrella or NGO coordinating organisations. In this section, I critically examine inter-NGO partnerships from three perspectives. First, I look at the partnerships between Northern NGOs (NGO from developed countries and, who are largely involved in funding NGOs from the developing nations) and Southern NGOs. Second, I examine inter-NGO partnerships from the NGO coordinating bodies and, third, partnerships arising from networks and coalitions.

2.7.2.2.1 Northern and Southern NGO Partnerships

Brehm (2001) contends that partnerships between Northern and Southern NGOs have become an important aspect in the development process. However, while Southern NGOs in particular are drawn into the concept of partnerships as an expression of solidarity beyond financial aid, the practical aspects of the concept are not only complex but are also hotly contested. Too often, inter-NGO partnership, like other partnerships in development, "is employed in ways which hide the unhealthy nature of many aid-related relationships; i.e., relationships that are unbalanced, dependency creating and based on skewed compromise" (Fowler 2000b, p. 3). This patron-client parallelism often results in relational disempowerment of the Southern NGOs and is usually manifested in the conditionalities imposed on the Southern NGOs. Given the multiple donors some of the Southern NGOs have, their ability to focus on their intended beneficiaries is diminished significantly as the focus shifts to their donors (see Nyamugasira 1999) who, according to Fowler (2000d), impose their external development models and policies which the Southern NGOs are coerced into following. Further imbalance in resources often results in what Nwamuo (2000) calls "senior partners" who erode the aspect of ownership. Under such conditions, the Northern

NGOs tend to control and determine priorities, budgets and activities, and this ultimately interferes with the autonomy of the local institutions. In summary, the politics of aid raises a number of questions, especially with regard to its effectiveness and coordination (Butchert 1999), ownership (Kanbur et al. 1999; Friedman 2000) and, accountability and transparency of both donor and recipient countries (Stokke 1995; UNESCO 2000).

While the power imbalance is one of the many dimensions determining the partnership between the Northern and Southern NGOs, the other emerging volatile issue is what I term "implementer syndrome". Some of the Northern NGOs have moved beyond providing financial support to their counterparts and become implementers of some local NGO constituencies. While this could prove to be a good thing, there are long- and short-term implications. For example, this scenario could result in stiff competition between local and international NGOs. In addition, the Northern NGOs may sidetrack and implement projects that have no relevance to the local needs due to lack of knowledge of the local setting.

2.7.2.2.2 Inter-NGO Partnerships from NGO Coordinating Organisations

Korten (1990) observes that one of the major challenges NGOs face in development is the problem they encounter with one another. In his words, Korten recounts that "jealousies among them are often intense, and efforts at collaboration too often break down into internecine warfare that paralyses efforts to work together towards the achievement of shared purposes. Ironically, it at times seems easier for some to work with government than with other NGOs" (Korten 1990, p. 130-131). The scenario described by Korten above has resulted in the formation of umbrella organisations or national NGO coordinating bodies in most developing countries in order to try to facilitate collaboration among development stakeholders. The locally mandated frameworks or government-legislated coordinating bodies are proving to be useful structures, although in some countries they are seen to interfere with NGO

independency. For example Fowler (2000d) has noted that coordinating bodies like Caucus of Development NGO Network (CODE-NGO) in Phillipines, Voluntary Agencies Network in India (VANI), Tanzania NGO Council in Tanzania, and Association of Brazillian NGOs (ABNGO) in Brazil are among the vibrant bodies that facilitate partnerships among NGOs. Although this is the case, the partnerships are not immune to problems. Bennet (1997) argues that such partnerships work best when they have both local and foreign support and that they do not duplicate the functions of the member NGOs unless such endeavours have been requested by the members. Bennet further maintains that the effectiveness of NGO coordinating bodies may also depend on forming other network structures such as sector network. In addition, he also observes that such coordinating organisations should be endorsed by governments and society as interlocutors on issues affecting the NGO sector. How the member NGOs comply with the code of conduct, which is usually the case with NGO coordinating bodies, is beyond the scope of this study.

2.7.2.2.3 Coalitions and Networks

As I mentioned in the preceding paragraph, networks have become fashionable in NGO partnerships. A conglomerate of NGOs may team up and form coalitions for purposes of, for example, advancing a policy reform issue. A number of United Nations Summits have witnessed such networks or coalitions at work (Fisher 1993). Such coalitions and networks usually operate on a common interest and agenda, with a particular theme as their focus. For example, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) is one coalition that works for the betterment of education in Africa and has lobbied the United Nations on issues of education.

While the three types of partnerships described above provide a broad base for understanding the dynamics of NGO interaction, there are other typologies which Fowler (2000d) suggests should be borne in mind when discussing inter NGO

partnerships. He identifies that the term "partner", one of the typologies, denotes the greatest breadth of organisational interaction based on mutual support for the identity and all aspects of each organisation. It is founded on the principles of holism and, as such, the partnership is comprehensive and open. Beyond the typology of "partner" comes another, "institutional supporter". Inter NGO partnership within the framework of institutional supporter is based on the overall development, effectiveness and organisational viability of an NGO. For example the organisations involved in this type of partnership may have a common interest in improving policy formulation, organisational strategies and operations, management procedures, sustainability and sectoral relations within their organisations.

Programme supporter as a form of inter-NGO partnership focuses on a particular area of development, for example, education, health, agriculture or other sectors. The nature of support may vary, but generally it might include financial inputs, technical expertise, and facilitation of access to specialist networks. Such programmes may in fact reflect the organisation's strategic goals such as education. Fowler's (2000d) other level of inter-NGO partnerships is one that emanates from a funding point of view - "project funder". In this partnership, the focus is narrowed to negotiating discrete projects. For example NGO may implement programmes on behalf of another institution, or at times, programmes that the NGO has decided to implement as a result of its own initiative or because it has won a bid. This is different from the other level of inter-NGO partnership which Fowler calls 'Development ally'. In this type of partnership, two or more NGOs form a coalition and pursue a development programme based on mutually agreed principles, time and objectives.

These typologies highlight not only the complexity and diversity of the NGO sector but also the challenge of determining which one of these partnerships works, as well as how and why. Since these partnerships are dynamic, sustaining them may not be easy. For

example, delegates to the *NGO Partnerships for Reproductive Health* conference in 1999 in Nairobi (International Planned Parenthood Federation 1999, online) noted that poor governance and leadership in NGOs does affect inter-NGO partnerships. This view is also shared by Manji (2000) and Kazibe (2000) whose observation from a research conducted by Bebbington and Riddell (1995) on the Northern and Southern NGO partnerships concluded that lack of experience in monitoring and evaluation of projects, and poor management of donor funds by Southern NGO have created ambivalence among Northern NGOs who question Southern NGOs' viability in management issues.

2.7.2.3 NGOs and Community Partnerships

NGO relationships with local communities can be understood from the perspective of the extent to which NGOs engage local community members in their projects, that is, how the local people participate in NGO programmes. The global aspect of this theme has been discussed in sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.2. However, two points need to be reiterated here. First, going back to the fundamental principles governing both participatory development and effective partnerships (Fowler 1997, 2000a, 2000c; Caledon Institute of Social Policy 1998), it can be deduced that both participation and partnerships are effective where there is high degree of information/resource sharing, consultation, and decision-making and where beneficiaries initiate action (see also Lane 1995). Therefore, effective NGO-Local community partnerships can be realised where NGO programmes provide feedback to the beneficiaries or where consultation between the two is not a one-sided process but stems from mutual trust. Second, it can also be pointed out that unless the beneficiaries are involved in the decision-making process on issues that affect them, partnership is more likely to fail.

2.8 Global Perspectives on NGOs in Education

While non-governmental organisations have played and continue to play a significant role in providing services in education (Mundy & Murphy 2001), a number of questions are asked about NGOs' ability to deliver high quality education. Questions are also raised as to what extent NGOs' capacity enables them to deliver the services more efficiently and effectively and, given the social, political and economic constraints, how their delivery services would tie in with government policies without the NGOs compromising their identity and autonomy.

Mundy and Murphy (2001, p. 94) argue that "there is very limited research on these organisations – certainly too little to allow us fully assess their roles in spreading Western educational models or in pushing for a greater inter-governmental cooperation in the field of education". They further maintain that despite the recent expansion in the number of NGOs in the field of education, there are signs of fragmentation in their efforts. Even when there have been trumpeted calls by the World Council for Education for All (WCEA), the challenges NGOs encounter, mostly in developing countries, are complex. In Sub-Sahara Africa where multi-party political system is rapidly unfolding, their roles continue to defined by the manner in which they engage other stakeholders, particularly the state.

Up until the 1970s, the state was viewed in most developing countries as the sole provider of public service (Faiti 1995; Watkins 2000). In some cases, private provision of education, at whatever level, was not only viewed with some degree of indifference but also with hostility (Archer 1993; Jellema 1997), resulting in the institutions ceasing to take an active role in such services. Watkins (2000) recounts that despite the hostile environment, some NGOs continued to provide education although at a very small scale.

Like the NGOs, governments contributed to the exacerbation of underdevelopment and poverty. Their (NGOs) intervention was vital in this regard. The argument levelled

against governments' inability to ameliorate the suffering of the masses was that "their education planners displayed all the worst characteristics of over-centralised bureaucrats; they were indifferent to local needs, insensitive to gender concerns, and unable to deliver an effective service" (Watkins 2000, p. 309). These observations advanced strong and powerful arguments for the "rolling back" of the state in favour of privatisation, decentralisation, participation and a greatly expanded role of NGOs (Mackintosh 1992; World Bank 1997; Mundy & Murphy 2001), which, according to their comparative advantage, were better placed to reach the marginalised sections of the population.

There was a change, however, in governments' perception of NGOs in the 1980s as a result of the globalisation of trade, slow economic growth and stringent measures introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Many developing countries have come to acknowledge the need for external support, be it in cash or kind. On the other hand, the failure of many governments to deliver effective social services to their citizenry has resulted in donor agencies seeking alternative means of channelling their assistance. NGOs have become conduits in this regard.

Third world education systems have been under strain over the past two and half decades, with stagnating enrolments, internal inefficiency, the eroding quality of schools and declining per pupil state spending (Schafer 1999). The funding shortfall was well pronounced in the 1980s when economic stagnation, increased debt, structural adjustments programmes, and inefficient state bureaucracies contributed to the problem (Rassool 1999). With the dwindling resources it became apparent that reviving education standards was far from possible without external partnerships, an issue that I now turn to discuss.

2.9 NGO Partnerships in Basic Education

A major current debate in development studies concerns collaboration and consultation between government and its allies in development endeavours. However, the question that remains largely elusive concerns the purposes of collaboration and consultation. Watkins (2000) and Cordeiro (2000) assert that NGO collaboration should aim to complement, not bypass, government efforts and to contribute to long term institutional building. In an era when there is a global call for good governance, accountability and transparency, this notion is also being challenged. What if government efforts are considered inappropriate, misguided, corrupt, inequitable or generally wrong? Is bypassing government useful in this context? There is little literature on the degree of consultation and collaboration on issues of development between government and NGOs, and more specifically on issues of education (Buckland 1998). However, a number of pressing issues can be teased out of the available literature.

Several studies have been conducted on the state of collaborative partnerships in education (Watkins 2000; Rugh & Bossert 1998; Wazir 2000) that provide an overview of NGO experiences. For example, The Oxfam Education Report (Watkins 2000) has numerous examples of the successes and failures of NGO attempts in building collaborative partnerships. ActionAid, a UK-based NGO, is cited as a classic example. Watkins recounts one example in Kenya where, despite the mobilisation of people to provide school infrastructure, there was minimal evidence of increased enrolments and quality education. The study concluded that "while the quality of schools had improved, parents and poor households had [sic] been marginalised in the decision-making process" (Watkins 2000, p. 310). Other examples given, for instance, Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbis (Archer 1994; Govinda 1997), Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) (Sweetser 1999), the Community Schools Project in Egypt (UNICEF 1997), and the Escuela Nueva Programme (Torres 1997), raise a number of issues that impinge on NGO-Government and NGO-Local Community collaboration. For example, one of the issues that also emerges in literature (see Gidron et al. 1992) is

parallel provision of education programmes that absolves a government's responsibilities to meet the basic needs of its people. Furthermore, while these NGOs have managed to establish education programmes, Watkins (2000) argues that their scale cannot be compared with that of government, hence the need for NGOs to work in conjunction with government.

Another issue that has emerged from the experiences of some of the NGO work cited above is suspicion. Where governments view NGOs with suspicion, any effort by NGOs to support development endeavours can be resisted. A very good example exists in El Salvador where collaborative mechanisms were virtually avoided in an effort to sustain a funded literacy project aimed at rebuilding the lives of the refugees displaced by the civil war in the country. Since the NGOs had no resources to sustain some of the basic education programmes as it relied heavily on external funding, the projects failed while government could have perhaps helped if mutual trust had been established in the first place (Archer 1994). This example reinforces Fowler's (1997) and Lewis' (2001) arguments about how effective partnerships can be developed and sustained.

Other examples that reveal the impact of effective collaborative partnerships in education and development are those found in East Asia, with Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) as a classic example. Kochan (2000) claims that UNICEF and Rockefeller Foundation regard BRAC's Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) programme as a blueprint for low cost non-formal education in rural areas. Its successes, which have relied heavily on its partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, provide a platform for learning. These successes however, come with challenges. Despite BRAC regarding itself as a supplementary organisation rather than a parallel institution to a formal school system provided by the government, Archer (1994) comments that coordination and collaboration with government can sometimes be problematic, especially when dealing with macro-issues. He further observes that while

"there is coordination to some extent at a national level, but at a local level, dialogue between BRAC NFPE centres and primary schools is very rare, even on a regional level, the ATEOs (Assistant Thana Education Officers) do not usually liaise with BRAC and vice versa" (Archer 1994, p 225).

Similarly, Archer (1994) observes that most of Bangladeshi Children's Learning Centres established by Actionaid and run by local NGOs:

> have almost no contact with local primary schools or the ministry of education. There is no joint planning, no joint training, no sharing of materials, no exchange of experiences - and there has been a lack of initiative on both sides to try to improve the situation (Archer 1994, p. 225).

Similar incidences of lack of collaboration between government institutions and NGOs in education provision have been reported in Guatemala and Peru (Valderrama, in Randell & German, 1998/1999 pp. 173 - 181); Uganda (Gariyo in Randell & German, 1998/1999, p. 210); Zimbabwe (Chisvo in Randell & German 1998/1999, p. 214); Zambia (Mufune et. Al. p. 30) and Gambia, (Fyvie & Ager 1999, pp. 1384 - 1395).

2.10 NGO Experiences in Facilitating Participatory Approaches to Basic Education

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa's (ADEA) 1999 Biennial Report observes that community participation in the provision of education is not a new phenomenon. Historically, much of the Africa region has its educational history from both missionary and pre-colonial work which encouraged community participation. The post-independence era saw governments taking control of education services, which essentially entailed stripping communities of ownership of the services until structural adjustment programmes and other contemporary programmes resulted in the rolling back of the state in favour of non-government organisations. Today, NGOs have become contemporary missionaries of the day, playing a pivotal role on facilitating the

'rekindled' participatory approaches in education provision. Like collaborative partnerships, community participation in NGO programmes has its successes and limitations.

One notable and comprehensive example of community participation in education is found in a study by Rugh and Bossert (1998). They develop an understanding of community participation as a practice and then further look at the circumstances that make community participation an appropriate strategy and also what impact is accrued from such practices. Models claiming to employ community participation as a core strategy were drawn from The IMPACT Project in Philippines; The Harambee Secondary School Movement in Kenya; BRAC in Bangladesh; The Community Support Project (CSP) in Pakistan; Escuela Nueva, in Colombia; and Fe y Alegria (EYA) in Bolivia and Venezuela. From the six cases, Rugh and Bossert (1998) tentatively conclude that the provision of quality education occurs if community participation is enhanced especially among the disadvantaged communities. A community's inclusion in the core activities of NGOs' programmes, they argue, provides a sense of ownership and vitality, even more so when backed up with technical expertise in terms of supervision and management of the programmes. As Fowler (2000) and Cordeiro (2000) argue, community participation is enhanced when roles and responsibilities are clearly defined between the NGOs and the local communities. Rugh and Bossert note that the community members were encouraged to increase their participation when they were allowed to reflect and critique what worked and what did not, but also where the activities were culturally sensitive. However, while there were some similarities in the strengths of community participation in NGO programmes, one issue remained elusive, that is, the model of participation employed. Essentially, this meant there was a need to determine whether or not the model was accountability-driven where participation is issue-focused, or partnership model where high participation is the norm, or demand-driven, where participation emanates from the community members themselves and is non-coercive.

2.11 Conclusion

The ascendancy of neo-development theory and the emergency of alternative [s] [to] development suggest that 'goodwill for all' humans as Chambers (1997) asserts, can be achieved through concerted efforts. If development is an advancement of social services, or general improvement in the social well being of people, it therefore can be argued that beneficiaries of such development endeavours have to be at the centre stage. The facilitative role NGOs may play in seeing this through first depends on a number of factors, namely, their partnerships with each other, their organisational capacity and the extent to which they are able to tackle some of the issues that transcend the mere practical aspects of development. Secondly, NGO partnerships with the state are a vital ingredient. Despite the dangers of not considering NGO heterogeneity and autonomy, the advantages of such partnerships are numerous than when an NGO does not have any space for negotiating with government. Given the advantages that may accrue from the NGO-Government partnerships, it is highly likely that NGOs can utilise such opportunities to forge meaningful partnership with their beneficiaries because at that point in time, government will have established mutual trust and framework for collaboration.

This chapter has demonstrated that despite the various forms of collaboration, such partnerships are meaningless if the fundamental principles governing participatory development based on the basic needs theory are not seriously put into practice in development process. Fundamental among these principles is participation in the decision-making process. Drawing from the numerous examples provided in this chapter, there is high collaboration where beneficiaries have been actively involved in the decision-making process during the identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of basic education programmes.

This chapter has also taken cognisance of the dangers associated with both participatory development and partnerships. In a number of cases, the political landscape can dictate the nature and degree of participation and partnerships. It has also been noted that local political elites with vested interests can shrewdly employ the very discourses of participation and partnerships to achieve their personal gains. Likewise, where participation and partnerships are employed in development discourse without clearly stated objectives, there is a high likelihood of exploitation by either the implementing agencies or donors who fund such programmes. Having looked at the issues of participation and partnerships in basic education from a global and theoretical perspective, the discussion now turns to examine these in the Malawi context.

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION, POLICY CONTEXTS AND THE NGO SECTOR IN MALAWI

3.0 Introduction

The transition from a one party to a multi-party political system in Malawi in 1994 has created an environment that has brought a number of changes and opportunities in the education system. As noted by Kakatera (2000), the transition has also brought myriad challenges. Despite these challenges, education remains a sector which the government believes will facilitate its efforts to alleviate poverty in Malawi. However, as I mentioned in Chapter One (see GoM 1995; National Economic Council (NEC) 1998), the accomplishment relies heavily on the extent to which local people participate not only in development activities but also on the "political life to ensure that the government upholds and respects the concepts of...transparency and accountability" (NEC 1998, p. 8). While participation is one of the basic tenets of the perceived development in Malawi, formation and sustenance of partnerships between and among development stakeholders is considered vital too.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it highlights, analyses and critiques the education context and policy framework of Malawi by briefly contextualising the geographic, social, economic, historical and political contexts of education in Malawi. Furthermore, I discuss the basic education reform process, its achievements and challenges, and provide an examination of the current proposed policies. The second part of the chapter examines the changing roles of NGOs in basic education. A critique of the NGO movement from the colonial period to the present multi-party era is

presented. The chapter concludes with a critical review of the dynamics of NGO participation and partnership building in education, first, with government, then with other NGOs, and ultimately with local communities, and of the modes of participation and partnership building which contribute to basic education in Malawi.

3.1 The Geographic, Economic, Social and Political Contexts of Malawi

Malawi is a small country with a tropical climate, lying between latitudes 9 and 17 degrees south of the equator. It is bordered by Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique (See Appendix 1) and has an estimated population of 11 million people (National Statistical Office 1997). The economy of Malawi is largely agriculturally-based and heavily susceptible to the vagaries of weather. Within agriculture, there are two sectors that impinge on the economy. The estate sector, predominantly owned by Europeans, uses indigenous Malawians as a source of labour and usually focuses on the export market. The small holder sector is mainly composed of farmers who grow subsistence crops. Because of the fact that much of the arable land is under the control of the white farmers, the local people are pushed to areas that are infertile and less productive. In addition, those working on the estates receive low wages and have no time to concentrate on their own small lands. This situation has resulted in much of the local population producing fewer subsistence crops and being heavily dependent on labour work for their survival.

With Gross National Product (GNP) per capita of US$230 in 1998 (GoM 1998), Malawi is among the poorest 15 countries in the world. Recent statistics (Shaw & Muchena 1998; United Nations 1998) indicate that more than half of the population lives below the poverty line, with rural and urban poverty estimated at 60 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. Urban poverty is characterised by high illiteracy rate, estimated at 60 per cent. Malawi also has low life expectancy (44 years), high population growth

(3.2%), a high infant mortality rate (134 per 1000 live births) and low per capita income (GoM 1998).

On a political front, Malawi's first multi-party elections held in May 1994 marked an end to thirty years of authoritarian, single-party rule. Since then there has been considerable progress on the establishment of institutions of liberal democracy which continue to facilitate freedom of expression, association, the press, information and worship. According to Fozzard and Simwaka (2002) civil society organisations have emerged as vocal critics of government policy. Another important dimension in the political context and transition of Malawi, and one which underpins this study, is the role played by civil society organisations, especially church-based organisations (to be discussed in detail in section 3.9). Although their contribution to the current democratic environment has been acknowledged by the government (Van Doepp 1998; Chirwa 2000) there is growing apprehension by the government of their partisan in their development activities.

Being a predominantly rural country, Malawi has a unique socio-cultural setting that can be used as a utility for creating opportunities for development. Traditionally, Malawians have strong cultural values embedded in the spirit of hard work. While the colonial administrators had little respect for the indigenous cultures, the situation is further exacerbated by not only government's lack of policy on the role of culture in the development process but also empirical literature on the same. Despite these gaps, the one party state system under Dr Hastings Banda (National Economic Council 1998) emphasised discipline, hard work, respect for elders and decent dressing especially among the youth. Another aspect worth mentioning is communal life. Malawians believe in living communally. The extended family system is common and, as a socio-cultural structure, it can be a utility to promote development. However, the success of the exploitation of such a structure in any community development may

depend on the extent to which local knowledge is utilised and incorporated in the development process.

3.2 The Education Legacy

To assume that Malawians had no education before the advent of missionary or colonial education is wrong. Although education literature tends to point out that the first contact in terms of education was during the missionary work, Malawians had some kind of education (pre-contact education). However, there is a dearth of literature about this aspect which is one that could have been a valuable resource to the present study. Therefore, the emphasis in this study is on the period between the missionary and independence eras.

Malawi's education system consists of eight years of primary, four years of secondary and four years of university education. During the first six and half decades of British rule in Malawi (1898-1964), government authorities played a distant role in the education of Africans. However, mounting pressure from the missionaries gradually forced the government to take an active role in the provision of education (UNESCO 1998). Banda (1982) observes that the introduction of missionary education was aimed at introducing Christianity to the indigenous people but at the same time introducing them to Western culture and ideology (to be discussed in more detail in section 3.9).

The period after independence saw a number of changes in and reviews of the education system. Hauya (1993) observes that after a series of reviews of the colonial curriculum by the government, it was decided to rewrite it as it was perceived to be irrelevant to the indigenous needs. The purpose of the revision, according to the then Secretary of Education was:

> To equip adequately the majority of the pupils who will be leaving school to seek employment in various occupations so that they may use the skills gained in primary schools to improve their knowledge

> and skills in the occupation in which they are engaged; achieve permanent literacy in English and become more useful citizens of the independent Malawi...and to cultivate a sense of pride in the children's own cultural heritage as exemplified through the local customs and manners, traditional institutions, folklore, proverbs and legends (Chilambo 1988, p. 10).

Although the post-independence policies significantly departed from those of the colonial masters, one obvious issue stands clear – neither the colonial nor post-colonial policies in education ever addressed the issues of local ownership. Both education policies had little to do with participation in the decision-making process. Since then a number of changes have taken place in Malawi's education system which have affected its policy implementation. In the sections that follow, I take a closer look at some of the policy changes as they relate to the two fundamental issues of participation and partnerships.

3.3 Rationale for Policy Change in Education

The current policy changes in education have been caused by a number of factors. As a result of the dynamics in the social, political and economic environment in Malawi, education policy and development have come under heavy scrutiny. In view of the government's policy of poverty alleviation, education is envisaged as an instrument through which the development and nurturing of an educated leadership and governance can be effected. While there is enough evidence to suggest that high quality education is critical to the sustained social and economic development of nations and the realisation of individual human potential (Benavot 1992; Haddan & London 1996; Sawyer 1997), the question of who determines the right or quality education remains an area of heated debate. On the one hand, the government, as a social service provider, has the responsibility to ensure that its people have access to education. On the other hand, the people (the beneficiaries) have a right to participate in deciding the kind of education rather than being merely silent recipients. Due to "their low level of skill and literacy", as argued by Watkins (1995, p.25) the majority of the people are excluded in

the decision-making process, ultimately resulting in poverty. This claim is well supported by Burkey (1993), whose work with the rural development workers in Uganda revealed a vicious cycle of poverty. While low literacy and skills are often held responsible for the present poverty scenario or underdevelopment in many developing countries, there remain contentious issues of who is responsible for overturning the situation and how poverty is being conceived in these discussions.

The other reason for the current education policy reform is based on social cohesion. Rather than narrow economic gains, social cohesion is the greatest prize for societies in which all citizens through learning, become more effective participants in democratic, civil and economic process. Malawi, as a nation with a vision, acknowledges the catalytic nature of education as a vehicle for the raising of not only national consciousness, but also group solidarity. The Malawi government recognises that:

> Educated Malawian nationals and local leaders are likely to be more receptive to new ideas and more tolerant of opposing views. A literate national population is also more likely to be supportive of the establishment and strengthening of social committees, parents/teacher associations, staff and students unions and the recognition and acceptance of stakeholder groups' role in school governance and in the sharing of educational responsibilities, including school finance (GoM 2000, p. 1).

The Malawi government's recognition of national awareness is a starting point for further reform. The sharing of responsibilities and collective governance as intrinsic values of participation is yet to be realised in education in Malawi. Although the vision sounds rosy, the current scenario in the rural areas remains a challenge to the government as the greater part of the population remains marginalised with little or no access to basic education infrastructure.

3.4 The Dynamics of Policy Change

The new educational policies for Malawi, as expressed by the Ministry of Education's Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) document for education in Malawi for 2000-

2012, catalogue seven key areas of concern: access, equity, quality, relevance, management, planning, and financial sustainability (GoM 2000). Although there is a strong emphasis on trying to mitigate against inequity, irrelevance, lack of quality, and other problems associated with management, planning and financial management, it has to be noted that these challenges are neither new in, nor isolated to, Malawi.

Malawi is currently in the process of implementing the Third Phase of its Education Development Plan (EDP). The first two EDPs covered the period between 1973 and 1980, and 1985 and 1995, respectively. In spite of the fact that the First Education Development Plan (EDP 1), implemented after independence in 1964, was intended to respond to the needs of the labour market and develop a school curriculum with relevance to the socio-economic and environmental needs of the country, it never achieved its objectives, particularly that of inculcating a sense of collective responsibility that embraced principles of participation and partnerships. There was a lack of clear strategies "with the exception of the primary education where the communities played an active role" (GoM 1998, p. 12).

In view of the minimal achievements of the objectives aimed at addressing issues of access and efficiency, coupled with widespread poverty as revealed by both EDP1 & 2, the current government education policy has centred its approach on providing education that is aimed at achieving the government goal of poverty alleviation, and creating opportunities for policy and planning. The policy also provides an opportunity for and encourages active participation by the private sector, NGOs, and social service providers on the basis of partnership (GoM 1998).

It is the aspect of "active participation and partnerships between government, NGOs and the local communities" that forms the centre of this study. Appendix 2 provides a

comprehensive account of the current basic education policies and proposed strategies as they appear in the PIF (GoM 2000, pp. 15-20).

3.5 The Current Education Policy

The measures adopted by the government in the policy formulation and refinement of basic education, raise three key issues. First, there is more emphasis on formal rather than non-formal schooling. Many NGOs that are engaged in education tend to focus on non-formal schooling, yet the government's effort to have clear policies on this sector of education remains distant. Second, it wants to ensure the participation of stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, private sector and donor community in the identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of basic education. Finally, it aims to increase girls' access to education and to integrate pupils with special needs (GoM 1998; GoM 1999; GoM 2000).

The three issues above raise a number of questions regarding how the Ministry of Education will go about mobilising other stakeholders in the implementation of such policies. They also raise questions as to how the government will not only ensure that policies are efficiently and effectively addressed (how results will be achieved through most cost-effective means) but also on how it will promote "strong partnerships with other basic education providers" (GoM 2000, p. 15), because having sound policies and strategies does not signify an automatic achievement of the intended objectives.

A great deal of educational activities in Malawi are carried out through projects which are donor-driven. While many of them are needs-based, there are a number of issues that are of critical importance to the success of education implementation as observed below:

> Very often projects are not reflected in the national budget and therefore the government of Malawi cannot assess to what degree

> these projects will eventually increase recurrent cost expenditures. Projects often set up their own management and administrative structures which eventually weaken the Ministry of Education's capacity to ensure national ownership, and often do not assist strengthening national capacities...Projects are often designed without national priorities in mind...with long term sustainability not very often addressed (GOM 1998, pp. 25-26).

This observation raises issues of monitoring and evaluation, budgetary limitations, administration and management of projects, synergy among various development stakeholders, prioritisation of the kinds of programmes and/or projects to be implemented, and sustainability. Bearing in mind that the overall government policy is to reduce poverty, the observations made above challenge both the government and other stakeholders to harmonise their activities to achieve maximum impact. Among these stakeholders are NGOs who may be playing a vital role in harmonising and contributing to the success of basic education programmes. The questions are: In what ways do NGOs, as part of the stakeholders, participate in the provision of basic education without compromising their values, ideologies and philosophies in the process? Will government ensure stability as it interacts with those stakeholders? More importantly, how do the NGOs facilitate participation of their beneficiaries and build partnerships with other stakeholders in the process?

3.6 Education Policy Formulation Process in Malawi

While the previous sections have explicated the progression of the dynamics of policy changes since independence in 1964, the discussion that ensues charts the policy process. The policy formulation process in Malawi is highly centralised. It has to be acknowledged that the centralisation of the policy process may be duly attributed to the past regime, which regarded any policy formulation process as an exclusive prerogative of government. Notwithstanding that, policy formulation processes have been dominated by high officials in various ministries and departments. Likewise, donor

agencies[4] have also featured prominently, particularly the World Bank, Department for International Development (DfID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), German Technical Corporation (GTZ), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORRAD), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Arab Development Bank (UNESCO 1998) in influencing local decision-making processes due to their high funding of some of the social services.

Participation has not been a major feature of the policy process in Malawi. Rather, the policy formulation process has been limited to top ranking officers, who rarely interact with the grassroots. The prominence of donor participation in the policy formulation processes, and, in view of the varying donor interests and priorities in response to their own policies, cannot be excluded from having an impact on the manner policies are formulated in Malawi. This has one fundamental implication, that is, with regard to who is/are the appropriate actor(s) in the formulation of the policies and whose priority interests matter.

Notwithstanding the observations noted above, the implementation process has its own pitfalls. For example, the implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) in one large sector that has attracted donor attention, has been inflicted with problems related to coordination, coherence, uneven and inequitable distribution of available resources, planning and management of information gathering, monitoring, and, not least, participation (MoE & UNICEF 1998). Where education is viewed as a vehicle to alleviating poverty (GoM 1998), denial of participation by the beneficiaries not only is

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[4] Malawi's education system is heavily dependent on donor funding. According to the Government of Malawi (2000), donor contribute 91 per cent to education. It is inevitable that under such circumstances, that policy formulation cannot be free from donor influence.

considered an aspect of social exclusion (which partially is a dimension of poverty), but also a gross breach of beneficiaries' right to participation in matters that affect their lives.

The challenges in the policy formulation process in Malawi are mirrored by the inadequacies and inexactitudes expressed in Bopp's (1994) illustration above. Some of these problems are ubiquitous within the Ministry of Education. Some of the top officials in the ministry dominate and want to exercise control over the policies, while at the same time, donors seek to influence it according to their interest. The critical aspect of the argument above, which may be among the institutional weaknesses of Malawian policy formulation and implementation process, could be the lack of linkage between the micro and macro policy process, and, the recognition that it is at the micro-level (grassroots) where data has to be generated to assist the macro level in making informed decisions.

3.7 Major Achievements in Basic Education Between 1994 and 1999

The period between 1994 and 1999 witnessed profound changes in basic education. Despite the numerous problems encountered during the implementation of EDP1 and EDP2, the implementation of EDP3, which, coincidentally witnessed the dawn of a new era in both political and educational perspectives, has had some notable successes, particularly in basic education.

In the history of Malawi, 1994 is an important year not only politically but also educationally. In March 1990, the World Conference on Education For All (EFA) By The Year 2000, adopted a recommendation to promote greater access, equity, and better quality in basic education worldwide. Malawi, like many other countries in the world,

participated in the conference and was a signatory to the convention. Since then, the government has been working towards achieving the set targets. One remarkable achievement was the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994. The FPE policy was adopted with the objective of increasing access to primary education (which at the current level of economic development, is regarded as basic education), eliminating inequalities in enrolment, building a strong socio-economic base within the society, and enhancing civic education on the social and economic benefits of education at the community level (MoE &UNICEF 1998, p. 23).

This policy resulted in a sharp increase of primary school enrolment from 1.7 to 3.2 million pupils in just one year (GoM 1999). Despite the hasty nature with which the policy was enacted, and insufficient budgetary allocation for its initial take-off, its endorsement both by the local populace and the donor community was overwhelming. So far, the government has increased its spending on FPE from 49% in 1993/94 to 61% in 1998/99 school sessions (GoM 2000, p. 7). Also of utmost significance within the period was the establishment of a programme that responded to the problem of access, namely The Malawi Primary Community Schools Programme. The Project, funded by a British–based donor organisation, Department for International Development (DfID), aims to assist the Ministry of Education deliver its policy of FPE and increase access to schools for boys and girls of standards one to four. One major characteristic of this programme is its focus on establishing lower primary institutions, that is, standards one to four throughout the country. Other key aspects of the programme include, inter alia, government/community partnership in the local management of the schools; full community participation in the decision-making process; strengthening head teacher management and professional leadership of their schools; development of social action plans; support for untrained and less experienced teachers in classroom practice; promotion of the process of teaching and learning for teachers as reflective practitioners; and improving classroom practice (GoM & Department for International Development 1998, p. 5). This project, while having a

community focus, falls short of its interaction with NGOs who are similarly working towards the same goal. For example, one of the needs assessment reports (Hughe-d'Aeth et al. 1996) observes that the school-community relationship is very tense. "Some 'heads' distrust the community, and parents are perceived to be a source of irritation or problem" (p.iii). It is from this perspective that conclusions can be drawn as the document hardly mentions participation of grassroots organisations.

3.8 Challenges of Education Reform in Malawi

Despite the achievements that Malawi has registered since the transition from single to multi-party politics, there are challenges facing the education system across the sectors of basic, secondary and tertiary education. These challenges include access, equity, quality, relevance, management, planning and financial sustainability. I now discuss these in turn, paying particular attention to basic education.

3.8.1 Access

Access to school facilities has been one of the major problems with which the Malawian education system has had to grapple. Until October 1994, only 50 per cent of the school age population in Malawi had access to primary education (GoM 1999) resulting in a low literacy rate. By abolishing school fees and uniforms, which many average Malawians could hardly afford, barriers to access were overcome. This initiative culminated in the introduction of FPE in 1994, which resulted in an increase in the enrolment rates from 1.8 to 3.2 million pupils in schools. By the time FPE was introduced, the education sector was heavily hit with the problem of lack of appropriate infrastructure. Children walk long distances to get to the nearest school. While efforts are currently underway to curb the magnitude of the problem, the challenges still remain. To many Malawians, FPE means that everything attached to schooling is free,

whereas in reality parents are obliged to provide virtually all the basic necessities for their children's learning.

Access to pre-school and adult education has also been affected. Pre-school as well as adult education in Malawi are not a direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education but the Ministry of Women, Gender and Community Services, who usually link up with District Community Services to provide the services. As such, pre-school education has been the privilege of children living in urban and sub-urban areas. Adult education also poses substantial challenges for the government as access is very limited in both urban and rural areas (GoM 1999; GoM 2000). This trend has excluded a large majority of children and adults in the rural areas.

3.8.2 Equity

An analysis of disparities of gender, income level, rural/urban and factors that contribute to these disparities are at the heart of poverty alleviation programmes in Malawi. The main concern of the government is low female participation in primary education. The government is also taking appropriate measures to ensure participation of all females in education across the sectors. Although gender disparities at primary level may not be significant, they do, however, raise some degree of concern as age increases. Unlike the situation in the primary education sector, gender disparities become more pronounced in the secondary education sector.

Likewise, there are serious concerns of gender imbalance in the rural/urban settings. Poverty in Malawi is predominantly rural with approximately 85 per cent of the population residing in rural areas (GoM 1998). Overall, urban residents have more educational opportunities than do their rural counterparts. Schools in urban settings have a noticeably better infrastructure with shorter travel distances to school (GoM,

2000). The lack of formal education among heads of households is one factor contributing to higher poverty levels. The problem is particularly acute among female heads of households in rural Malawi, where 62 per cent have never attended school, in contrast to 20 per cent of the urban female households heads; and seven per cent of urban male heads of households have no formal education (MoE & UNICEF 1998). These trends do raise equity concerns in educational opportunities between the male and female cohorts.

3.8.3 Quality

Quality is a complex concept when applied to education contexts. The numerical gains in access to primary education as a result of FPE have affected the quality of education in Malawi. The relationship between access and quality cannot be overemphasised. In fact, increased access is rendered ineffective if the quality of the education provided is low. There are three main ways in which poor quality in basic education in Malawi, especially at the primary, is manifested. Resulting from increased enrolments, classrooms are very overcrowded, forcing schools to create temporary classrooms or shelter under trees and in other structures like churches and mosques. Also the hikes in enrolment rates have directly impinged on the teacher to pupil ratio. An example is reported of a Malawian school in which:

> One untrained teacher was in sole charge of a standard 1 class of 250 pupils and a standard 2 class of 150 pupils between which there was a total of 10 text books and no teacher's guide. ...Many teachers have to contend with class sizes of 200 or more pupils, a factor that must have a huge influence on the quality of learning (James & Kakatera 2000, p. 6).

The scarcity of teaching and learning materials has had a profound impact on the quality of education. The observations provided by James and Kakatera (2000), illustrate in part, the gravity of the problem. In many instances, rote learning is the order of the classroom, where teachers have no chance to offer individualised learning or support, let alone homework, which requires that pupils have textbooks. The

consequences are far reaching and disturb the internal efficiency of the system, especially when measured in terms of dropouts and repetition rates. While the number of children attending primary education and other basic education institutions has increased, the number of children repeating classes, dropping out and completing primary education is falling because repeating a class affects the utilisation of the scarce financial resources as more money is spent on one person stagnating in one class. Appendix 4 provides some statistical evidence of the magnitude of the problem in 1997.

3.8.4 Relevance

As it was earlier alluded to in sections 3.2 and 3.3 (see also Chilambo 1988; Banda 1982; GoM 1999) Malawi still faces the challenge of ascertaining how relevant its curriculum is. More importantly is the question of who ascertains its relevance. Two issues are of extreme importance in this context. First the problem of relevance stems from considering whether the curriculum should be viewed as a vehicle for promoting students for further schooling or not. Similarly, it is also true when consideration is based on providing basic skills that can be applied to everyday life, irrespective of its importance in facilitating transition to further education, or probably a combination of the two arguments above (GoM 1998, GoM 2000). NGO involvement in determining the relevance of curriculum is minimal (Fozzard & Simwaka 2002). Citing government's ambivalence of civil society in general, Fozzard and Simwaka (2002) point out that NGO alienation in participating in decisions concerning development and education is their (NGOs') political overtones and their critique of government policies.

3.8.5 Management

The Malawi educational system has been and continues to be characterised by lack of appropriate management procedures, and this is particularly so in the primary education sector, where quality has been affected by lack of supervision and monitoring. Where supervision occurred, it was literally an inspection-based system, which was widely viewed as a 'fault-finding' mission (GoM 1999; GoM 2000). An effective management and planning system is regarded as a prerequisite for both improved quality as well as better use of resources. Currently, three key challenges to the management of basic education are improvement of supervisory services, especially in the wake of economic hardships, enhancing participation of stakeholders in the management of basic education both in the rural and urban communities, and centralisation of management, not only of teacher deployment and recruitment, but also in issues of decision-making (GoM 1999; GoM 2000; Hauya 1993).

3.8.6 Planning

Planning is critical to effective education management. Planning which is deemed effective is based on available information. The major education planning challenge relates to the strengthening of relevant capacities for the collection, analysis, storage and use of educational data (GoM 2000). UNESCO (1998, p. 88) notes that:

> Even if they are well-funded, some programmes are not implemented because there are no action plans or targets, a limited sense of ownership and infrequent follow-up. Planning processes are weak because they happen after the process has begun. ... Planning difficulties are linked to the fact that there are frequently simply not enough people in the job to do the job. ...The poor utilisation of skilled personnel appears to be a major factor contributing to planning and management difficulties.

The observations made above underscore the argument that top-down development or instrumental participation leads to marginalisation because those who are supposed to be primary recipients have no sense of ownership. In addition, while development

agencies are supposed to build local capacity, much time is spent on tokenism that virtually leaves the majority disempowered. Thus, the expanding basic education sector in Malawi raises a lot of questions as to how these problems can effectively be tackled.

3.8.7 Financial Sustainability

The ramifications emanating from government's policy of poverty alleviation, with education as its centrepiece, have substantial uncertainty about how it can sustain the projects geared towards achieving the goal. Given the economic constraints currently being experienced, a call for concerted efforts to sustain the growing education sector, especially basic education, becomes inevitable. The major challenge of the current system of education financing is its over-dependence on donors who contribute 91per cent towards education (GoM 2000). This dependence poses serious problems on national ownership and sustainability in the event of donor fatigue.

Inefficiency in the use of available resources for education has become an issue of national concern, as observed below:

> In 1997/98, for example...it cost the government Malawi Kwacha (MK) 75,230 (US$2,916) to educate one university student compared to MK2,934 (US$114) for a conventional secondary school student only US$30 was spent on Distance Education Centres (DEC) student, MK5,604 (US$224) for a Teacher Training College student and a meager MK362 (US$14) for a primary school student (GoM 2000, p. 14).

These disparities in resource allocation have widened and continue to widen the gap so that even if there is a significant increase in public spending by government for education, policies in basic education spending do not go far enough to address issues of quality.

Further inefficiency in resource allocation related to financial sustainability has been well documented (GoM 2000; GoM 1999; GoM 1997). Of the 1997/98 total recurrent

expenditure for education, 87 per cent went to staff emoluments, but only four per cent to teaching and learning materials. While the salaries for the teaching force in Malawi remain some of the lowest in the region, such resource allocation becomes hard to justify when such a skewed allocation emerges and fails to justify why other components such as teaching and learning materials are not given due consideration.

Given the magnitude of the current challenges, and, as the government has more than once expressed the need for collaborative partnerships between and among development stakeholders, NGOs are not only a viable alternative in the augmenting of social service provision but also partners whose potential can be exploited to fully complement the government's effort and policy of basic education. For example, if NGOs fully participate in development and implementation of policy issues, it is highly likely that they may get encouraged to work in remote areas where the government cannot reach, hence improving access, quality and relevance to basic education. Because of NGOs' potential to work with other grassroots organisations and local communities (Tendler 1992; UNRISD 2000), management and planning skills can be achieved, and through a collaborative effort between government and NGOs, potential for replication of such technologies is high. It is from this background that NGO participation and partnerships with government can improve sustainability and transparency. The ensuing sections discuss NGOs in basic education in Malawi.

3.9 An Historical Development of the NGO Sector in Education in Malawi

As I mentioned in section 3.2, the introduction of formal education in Malawi can be traced from the European missionaries who came to the country towards the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century (Banda 1982). The main aim of schooling, from the missionary perspective, was to spread the word of God and to provide basic literacy, that is, reading, writing and arithmetic. While the emphasis may

have been on Christianity, the basic literacy aspect played a vital role in facilitating small-scale entrepreneurial activities. Thus, the missionaries were the first NGOs to be involved in education in Malawi, and, since then, they have been dominant players in the provision of education. The civil society-based NGOs followed much later, but until recently, were fewer in number.

The early stages of the missionary NGOs were challenging. Each mission operated independently and applied its own code. In addition, the missions also adopted their own curricula and management systems. There was hardly anybody to coordinate or regulate and give direction on matters of policy, standards and curricula. The protectorate government had no funds to supplement the missions' efforts and therefore played a very minimal role in the education of the Africans. However, according to Pachai (1973) and Banda (1982), there were steps taken towards a unified approach to education provision by the missionaries in 1901, although some missionary NGOs resisted. Gradually government began to contribute significantly to the education expansion, but still no proper partnerships were established at this stage.

The period between 1926 and 1963 witnessed drastic changes in the role of government in education. Banda (1982) and Hauya (1993) recount that missionary NGOs and government education providers managed to get more organised and gave direction and support to each other. However, at this stage, the Africans were simply passive recipients of the education decided upon either by the colonial government or the missionary NGOs.

3.9.1 The Post-Colonial Era: 1964-1994

The consolidation of government control of education reached a turning point during Banda's era, when, due to financial constraints, many of the missionary NGOs began

to relinquish their responsibilities. The recruitment, deployment, and selection of students, and the payment of primary and secondary teachers' salaries were the prerogative of the government (Hauya 1993). Therefore, during the post-colonial period, missionary NGOs' participation in education was reduced to that of simply assisting the government in the provision of resources, especially the construction of school infrastructure. Given the authoritarian climate during Banda's regime in which no differing views were entertained, the missionary NGOs had little or no role in matters of policy towards education despite being the proprietors of those institutions (Pachai 1973).

3.9.2 NGOs in a Democratic Transition to Multi-Party Politics

One of the manifestations of Dr Banda's single - party political system was a restrictive practice that did not allow the flourishing of the NGOs in the country. As noted by Rogge (1997, p. 3), "controlling of information, censorship, freedom of expression and organisation were outlawed...and decision-making of any kind was in the hands of the few. Independent, self-mobilisation and community action was [sic] discouraged and self-help was promoted only in so far as it supported the goals and vision of the state".

While a number of local and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) were involved in the provision of basic education, especially pre-school and adult education, they (NGOs) had little involvement in issues of advocacy, capacity building and community empowerment (Faiti 1995). The democratisation process which was characterised by more openness and less restriction paved the way for the mushrooming of different NGOs. Some of the factors believed to have contributed to this trend include liberalisation, globalisation and accessibility to donor funding. Albeit unregulated, the NGO sector has since then expanded significantly. However, the majority of the local NGOs, Faiti (1995) observes, lack not only financial and managerial capabilities but also skills in accountability and transparency.

The most significant landmark in the re-ignition of NGO participation in education was after the 1994 general elections which the United Democratic Front (UDF) won. The new President pledged to "build an open society, governed by democratic rules and institutions which encouraged participation of individuals, groups and communities, in the political, economic and human development of the country" (Rogge 1997, p. 3). The impact of this statement was far-reaching. The proliferation of NGOs thereafter was testimony. CONGOMA (1999) and Faiti (1995) document that the number of local NGOs has since increased from 48 in 1992 to 180 in 1999. Likewise, the presence of INGOs has also increased from 12 in 1994 to around 30 in 1999. Currently, there are 57 NGOs providing basic education programmes in areas such as pre-school, primary, adult education, construction of school blocks, civic education, and secondary schooling.

3.10 The Nature of NGO Participation in Basic Education in Malawi

The pre-1994 notion of participation was centred on the practice of demanding communities to contribute to school construction and other related activities. While the government recognises the role NGOs play in service delivery, it also regards them as a threat, politically and economically (Kalemba 1997). As observed by the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) (2001) during their extensive consultation on Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, "there was clear evidence of consultation fatigue and recognition that consultation does not necessarily involve participation in decision-making" (MEJN 2001, p. 51). As noted earlier, participation as a process entails that individuals and communities must take a leading role or be given an opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives (Feeney 1998). While there was considerable consultation and participation by NGOs in education long before the multi-party political era, MEJN's observations

contextualise the situation quite clearly. Questions may be asked as to whether or not the advent of multi-party politics has improved the manner in which NGOs and government interact, given the claims of a decentralised education management. If there is any collaboration, the fundamental questions that may be asked are: in what ways, and, at what level participation among stakeholders is realised and why.

While there is recognition of the proliferation of NGOs in Malawi, including those providing basic education, there is little documentation of the nature of NGOs and local communities participation in education since 1994. Not only is there a dearth of evidence of what strategies NGOs use in the identification, development, implementation and evaluation of basic education programmes, but also of factors that contribute to the success of or place limits on participation.

When Free Primary Education was declared in 1994 as a means to mitigate the problem of access in schools, donor agencies, notably the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), began to take a keen interest in ascertaining the institutional capabilities of the education-based NGOs. At that particular time, information regarding the role of NGOs in the sector was barely available. The other concern was that it was becoming increasingly clear that more NGOs were taking a keen interest in providing basic education. It was probably due to the reasons stated above that USAID and CIDA, who were at that time the key bilateral donor agencies, began to conduct research studies to facilitate their decision-making.

One notable study was conducted between October and December 1993 by USAID (USAID 1994). The study aimed at gaining an understanding of NGO programmes in education and assessing the needs and capabilities of NGOs in education. Furthermore, the study examined the potential for expanding NGOs' role in providing primary

education in unserved rural areas. The findings revealed a number of issues, notably, high drop out and repetition rates; low literacy rate; poor education system in terms of access, coverage, quality and efficiency; and low government expenditure in the basic education sector. The study also unravelled a number of NGO weaknesses in areas such as organisational structures; delivery mechanisms; management structures and capacity; lack of training in the planning, management and financial administration of projects; ill-prepared and less qualified mid-level managers and specialised programme staff; poor monitoring systems of educational programmes and donor dependence (USAID 1994, p. vi-xii). Although the study was a groundbreaker in the field of education, little attention was paid on how NGOs facilitated participation of, and collaborative partnerships with, local communities in education.

The study's authors made a number of recommendations to the government which were later included in one of its national programs called the "Government of Malawi (GoM) and UNDP 5th Country Programme". In this programme, the main objective of the education component was to:

> Strengthen the provision of Basic Education services in an integrated manner, especially underserved parts of the population through decentralised planning, management, development and reinforcement of formal and non-formal education and more effective participation by communities and NGOs, thereby contributing to human resource development and reduction of poverty (Bisika et al. 1995, pp. 6-7).

The achievement of this objective, in particular, effective participation by communities and NGOs, has remained elusive as more challenges compound the education system. In addition, the unfolding of the political landscape, which is marred by tension and suspicion between NGOs and government, makes collaboration in development endeavours even more difficult. For example, government's demand to be engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of NGO development programmes without the former being monitored is a good example of the prevailing climate marred with tension

between the two entities. This lack of reciprocal accountability and transparency has led to many NGOs in Malawi going it alone, hence resulting in strained partnerships.

Rogge (1997) conducted another groundbreaking study on the emerging role of the NGO sector in Malawi. His study examined the NGO sector in Malawi in general, provided a brief synopsis of the key issues and constraints confronting the NGOs, particularly indigenous NGOs, and reviewed some of the broader initiatives being taken by the Canadian and international NGOs, CIDA, the wider donor community and the Malawi government. Drawing heavily on documentary evidence and the researcher's own experience, the study drew several conclusions about the state of NGO sector in Malawi. Two of the key issues reported were lack of community participation and the unwillingness of the government to discharge some of its responsibilities without monetory incentives. These findings also support Booth and Ndalama's (1995) study on the training needs of Malawian NGOs and, which concluded that there is "participatory short-circuiting" and also "lack of community participation" (Booth and Ndalama 1995, p. 38). While the intended beneficiaries were engaged in the initial stages of identifying needs, the study reports that they (the beneficiaries) were not accorded the opportunity to decide on what action to take. Thus the beneficiaries ceased to own the programmes and resorted to demanding payment of some kind.

However, Rogge (1997, p.33) further notes, "NGOs in Malawi suffer from a profound inability to step back from their immediate physical needs and come to grips with what it is they are really trying to do, how they are doing it, or even, if they be doing it all". These sentiments mirror further findings of his study which in part observed that lack of accountability and transparency may contribute to some of the challenges. While the study attempts to unravel some of the generic challenges the NGO sector in Malawi encountered at that time, it failed to critique the extent to which these NGOs facilitated

change in participatory approaches and the dynamics of partnerships, which are crucial in development circles.

In 1999 and 2000, two studies were conducted. Kaimila-Kanjo's (1999) study on the state of basic education in Malawi aimed to identify problems in education and the key players involved in the provision of basic education. These 'players' included civil society, of which NGOs are a part, and donor agencies, as well as International NGOs (INGOs). Using interviews and documentary evidence, the study reiterates problems identified in earlier studies namely, that basic education in Malawi is heavily affected by problems of access, quality and equity. While the study provided ample evidence of the major challenges, there is little attempt to critically examine the role of the NGOs in the education sector, and precisely how they facilitate participation and partnership building in basic education. Despite its recommendations for the involvement of NGOs, the study makes virtually no mention of what strategies should be employed by NGOs.

While Kaimila-Kanjo's study was being conducted, two of the leading NGOs in Malawi (Oxfam UK & Ireland and Action Aid Malawi) had engaged a consultant to determine the viability of an NGO Coalition towards quality basic education in Malawi (Kakatera 2000). The study aimed to understand the activities of the civil society organisations (CSOs) in the education sector; their geographical coverage; scale of intervention; CSO-Government collaboration in the area of basic education; and the possible effect of institutionalisation of an NGO-Government Coalition for basic education in Malawi (Kakatera 2000, p. 5).

A number of local and International NGOs, including donor agencies and government departments were interviewed and, documentary evidence was gathered. The study identified and revealed a number of practices that could be beneficial to education in Malawi, for example, a constant flow of programme information among stakeholders;

coordinated delivery of service towards quality education geographically or thematically, and the use of the coalition as an important forum for identifying challenges but also for influencing government and donor policies towards basic education. This role, which in essence is already that of CONGOMA, may explain the problem of coordination among NGOs in Malawi (See section 3.11). However, as mentioned in Chapter One, the NGO sector in Malawi is still developing and lacks experience and coordination mechanisms. CONGOMA, despite being an umbrella organisation, lacks such skills, consequently resulting in each and every NGO doing things its own way.

The study, however, did identify some challenges. First, there was "the lack of guiding policy on [sic] part of the implementing ministry - Ministry of Education, on how it would want the CSOs to complement government efforts" (Kakatera 2000, p. 11). Second, it was noted that while efforts were underway to form a coalition or alliance, several problems were hindering these efforts, for example, lack of memoranda of understanding and articulated common concerns/issues and action plans. Not only was there lack of cooperation, but also unwillingness of the members to recognise each others' abilities, and lack of capacity to execute programmes appropriately. However, as with the other two studies (USAID 1994; Kaimila-Kanjo 1999), one of the weaknesses of the Oxfam and ActionAid studies was its lack of consideration of the role NGOs can play in mobilising local communities to participate in the provision of basic education.

3.11 Government-NGO Collaboration: The Malawi Style

Collaborative partnerships between government and NGOs in the period from 1980 to 1992 were characterised by "tension and suspicion" (Faiti 1995, p. 27) because of the autocratic and repressive regime that existed in this period. The call for coordinated collaboration was far more pronounced in 1985 when it became difficult for the government to decide which NGO to deal with in specific activities. This situation

precipitated the formation of the Council for Social Welfare Services in Malawi (CSWSM) as a coordinating body for NGOs. During its first two years of operation it had its secretariat in the Ministry of Community Services and Social Welfare (Simukonda 1992).

In 1992, the CSWSM collapsed and was replaced by the Council for NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA). Several factors have been advanced to explain the collapse of the CSWSM. First was the issue of the overly broad criteria used for membership eligibility. The CSWSM membership included NGOs, inter-governmental organisations, city councils, commercial organisations, government agencies and ministries, and individuals (Simukonda 1992). This raised some pragmatic problems of how to coordinate organisations that had very few interests in common beyond providing social welfare services to the poor. In addition to the membership problem, the role played by government in the formation of the CSWSM aroused suspicion within the NGO sector, who regarded it (CSWSM) as an instrument through which the government sought to control NGOs (Simukonda 1992).

Collaborative partnerships in education and development in the post-1994 era has taken a different course, with government more tolerant, and looser regulatory monitoring mechanisms. Despite this, the uncoordinated efforts between the government and NGOs has resulted in duplication of efforts or conflicts, particularly in rural areas. As noted by USAID (1994, p. 77), collaboration at a district and local level is "ad hoc, informal, basic, one on one for specific activities". Kadzamira and Kunje (2002) resonate with USAID and point out that collaborative partnerships have not improved in a positive sense. Citing Kadzamira's study on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector, Kadzamira and Kunje (2002) observe that collaboration between the Ministry of Education and NGOs is poor and lacks coordination of activities. The

Ministry of Education's lack of attention to what NGOs do is believed to exacerbate the situation.

While the call for NGO participation in providing education at all levels sounds noble, the multi-sectoral approach which many NGOs have adopted has created tension. For example, those NGOs who, while providing basic education, play an advocacy role, are seen as pressure groups. One typical example of a point of tension is transparency and accountability which was noted by Rogge (1997). As stated earlier, the Government-NGO Coalition for basic education in Malawi advocates accountable and transparent execution of resources. However, issues of accountability and transparency in Malawi are quite explosive because, for the government (Ministry of Education), this is seen as an invasion of government space and prerogatives. As such, NGO participation in government policy dialogue is minimal.

Furthermore, Kalemba and her colleagues provide a critique of both NGO and government ability to alleviate poverty through education and argue that such efforts are by no means easy because there are numerous disjointed, ad hoc and unplanned ways of dealing with social and development issues. Not only are there multiple and overlapping themes and issues about poverty, credit, gender and illiteracy, but also a lack of integrated sectoral policies and little sharing of information which is vital in making informed decisions and, a lack of a systematic and coordinated approach to monitoring social trends (Kalemba et al 1996, pp. viii-ix).

3.12 Areas of Collaboration between NGOs and Government as Reflected in the Draft Government NGO Policy

In spite of the fact that this study has little to do with the current Draft Government NGO Policy per se, it is worthy of mention because not only does it clarify some of the

dynamics of the Government-NGO partnerships but also the way in which the policy may affect the degree of NGO participation in government programmes.

The process of initiating an NGO Policy started in 1993 when CONGOMA in collaboration with the government initiated a debate on the NGO Law. CONGOMA, as an NGO coordinating organisation, was interested in the NGO Law for three reasons. First, the NGO Law was intended to create a legislative framework that would guarantee NGOs the right to exist in Malawi and also accord them the freedom of association, expression and operation, within the borders of the state. Not only was the NGO Law aimed to preserve the credibility and integrity of the NGO sector through good policy, backed by principles of accountability and transparency, but also to secure tax exemption and other fiscal benefits for NGOs in Malawi (Makuwira 1998). Implicitly, this meant that NGOs could forge partnerships with other stakeholders and participate fully in activities that would be of benefit to their respective organisations.

The NGO policy falls within the new Malawi Constitution, which allows for freedom of association. In its preamble, the Policy recognises the importance of NGO services. It recognises and permits the work of both local and international NGOs, whose establishment should extend beyond the boundaries of the urban areas to the rural communities. The major objectives of the Policy are basically to encourage NGOs in delivering services and managing projects and programmes, sometimes on behalf of others, including government; to mobilise human, financial and other resources for the benefit of the disadvantaged, and to promote NGO work by carrying out research and innovations on human resources development through information dissemination, education and training activities (CONGOMA 1996). The government envisages that in order to maximise the achievement of the objectives, a number of strategies have to be put in place, for example, that communication and consultation form the basis of the relationship.

Section 2.3 of the Draft NGO Policy is probably the most critical. It deals with "Working Partnership" on the basis that those partnerships will be recognised only if the NGOs are assisting in the delivery of government services and programmes, either in form of contract or NGO-initiated programmes. Furthermore, not only does government recognise participation of NGOs in policy formulation but also contends that it is their (NGOs') right to influence policies and practices, provided that NGOs respect government as having the legitimacy and mandate of the electorate (CONGOMA 1996, Annex v). The policy document articulates five key areas of collaboration, two of these, monitoring and capacity building, are vital to this study.

3.12.1 Monitoring

Monitoring is a key aspect of NGO-Government partnerships in Malawi and is fundamental to generating information that may facilitate informed decisions. As the NGO sector in Malawi grows, there is also an increased concern about the impact, assessment, evaluation, cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis of how NGOs' work can be sustained. The Government Draft NGO Policy argues that it is in the interest of both the donors and government that any project developed by NGOs should be subject to monitoring to ensure a databank of quality information. It is also argued that accountability and transparency of donor and/or government funding can be achieved if monitoring is taken into serious consideration. However, the issue that remains problematic is the question of who monitors NGO projects to ascertain their impact - is it NGOs alone, the government, or independent bodies?

3.12.2 Capacity Building

Capacity building has become one of the key components of institutional development and change (see Anheier 2000; James et al. 1998; Tembo 2001) because the NGO

sector in Malawi is relatively new and hence lacks experience and expertise. Traditionally, capacity building interventions have emphasised strengthening state and public sector institutions. Lately (see Society for Participatory Research in Asia n.d.), the growing importance of civil society around the world has necessitated the need for strengthening the capacity of these organisations. Considering the potentially invaluable contribution from the NGO sector as a whole, the Draft Policy recognises that the government should strive to promote NGO capacity building by collaborating with donors in the financing of different avenues of institutional building, for example through seminars, short courses and study tours.

3.13 NGO-Local Community Partnerships in Education in Malawi

To understand the role of NGOs in empowering communities through collaborative partnership process, it is vital to understand also the Malawian view of community development. According to the Malawi Government's "Statement of Development Policies 1988-1996" (GoM 1988), community development is "a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are combined with those of government institutions to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities" (p. 125). Theoretically, this view has a common platform with the current global thinking which argues that local communities themselves have to determine what is appropriate and be able to devise means and ways of achieving their goals with government and NGOs playing a facilitative role. How real is collaborative partnership between NGOs and government in education in Malawi?

As noted earlier (GoM 1995, GoM 2000; OPC 2000), the government recognises that in view of the high level of poverty and paucity of technical expertise, especially in the areas of social development, external assistance, from external sources, is inevitable. As such, NGO participation in government programmes has received attention in relation

to community development. Most NGOs in education are adopting a multi-sectoral or integrated approach to development and implementing education programmes alongside other interventions such as health, agriculture, income generating activities, advocacy, capacity building and others. While this approach is essential in view of the current poverty situation, the major question surrounding its success is about the methodologies employed. This aspect is critical in two ways. First, the district focus of development has created hierarchies of development committees, which are envisaged to promote participation of local people. Second, as a result of these structures, NGOs involved in grassroots development serve as co-opted members of these committees. The question that arises from this scenario is how NGOs handle and facilitate collaboration and participatory approaches to education provision. Kadzamira and Kunje (2002) observe that collaborative partnerships between NGOs and local communities start with the empowerment process, whereas NGOs conduct needs assessment using participatory methods as an entry point.

Another strategy, which many local Malawian as well as International NGOs have adopted, is capacity building. This usually takes the form of training. For NGOs in education, the target is training in the management of schools. Community structures such as 'Building Committees', 'Parent-Teacher Associations', 'Village Development Committees' and local leaders have been targeted. The consciousness – raising process, which is viewed as a mechanism intended to enable local people to mobilise themselves towards local governance of schools, is affected by two major challenges - illiteracy and politicisation of development. It is within this context that many development programmes are provided where the beneficiaries have demonstrated their support to the government of the day irrespective of whether they have differing views.

3.14 Inter-NGO Collaboration in Malawi

The effectiveness and efficiency of NGO contributions to development in general may depend on a number of factors including collaboration between and among NGOs in Malawi, and this issue has resulted in a heated debate.

Currently, there are three categories of NGOs operating in Malawi. According to CONGOMA classification (CONGOMA, 1996), the first category is the *International NGOs.* These are NGOs whose Board and central offices are abroad. The second category is the *Established NGOs.* These are defined as local NGOs with both their Board as well as central office locally based and which have been in operation for more than three years. The last category is the *Emerging NGOs.* These are also local NGOs, with both their Board and central office locally based and which have been in operation for less than three years. So far, the effect and importance of this nomenclature has not been questioned. For example, whether or not experience has any bearing on their programmes, managerial skills or the manner in which they collaborate with other stakeholders is virtually absent in Malawian development literature. However, it has to be noted that both the Established and Emerging NGOs in Malawi are predominantly donor-dependent in their resource mobilisation. In some cases, NGOs receive their funding through intermediary organisations (INGOs). This raises the question of the nature of collaboration and partnerships between the local and the International NGOs.

In a survey conducted by CONGOMA that sought, among other things, sources of funds for NGOs in Malawi, NGOs were strongly opposed to publication of the names of their private donors, arguing that this information was confidential (Faiti, 1994). Juma (1995, p. 107) has observed a similar situation in Kenya where he found that "those (NGOs) funded from the same source tended to be suspicious about one another and therefore less willing to share information". At the field level, they "go it alone" attitude, as Chakumodzi (1992) and CONGOMA (1996) have noted, seems to be

hampering the degree of coordination, resulting in duplication of efforts and wastage of resources (See Kakatera, 2000). With the absence of government policy on NGO operations (at the time of this study, the Government NGO Policy was in its draft form and far from being claimed to be part of the government regulatory apparatus), the registration of NGOs is unlimited and unmonitored. This raises one fundamental question regarding collaborative mechanisms between and among NGOs without government NGO policy in place.

Despite such observations, CONGOMA has made some efforts to strengthen collaboration and coordination among NGOs. During the mid 1990s, a number of meetings were organised to try and muster support for the establishment of sector networks, for example, Education, Small and Medium Enterprise, and Water and Sanitation Networks. However, there are a number of issues surrounding sector networks. Although sector networks are viewed as vehicles for facilitating coordination and collaboration among NGOs, one key aspect that has remained elusive is the degree to which individual NGOs within the network share their values and ideologies, which are presumably, based on their missions. Furthermore, the fact that NGOs operate in a political environment, raises the question of the extent to which these sector networks influence government processes. Perhaps key to the whole argument are the consequences the sector networks will have on other networks, not only within the NGO community, but also within the private sector. The fact that CONGOMA, as a coordinating body, has taken such initiatives on board, does not necessarily guarantee success in inter-NGO partnerships. It is within this context that some analysts have also raised the question about whether the Government Draft NGO Policy will facilitate collaboration between and among NGOs on the one hand, and government on the other (Makuwira 1998).

3.15 Conclusion

Despite considerable achievements registered by the government in the field of education, the socio-economic and political landscape within which the Malawi education system operates poses numerous challenges which require concerted effort between government and other development partners. This chapter is based on the assumption that basic education plays a crucial role in mitigating poverty. In this regard, policy reform can be meaningful if other stakeholders participate at every level of the development intervention. Given the nature of the NGO sector in Malawi, the manner in which this could be achieved is not as easy as one might expect. The emerging NGO culture in Malawi requires that both NGOs and government understand the dynamics which are at play between them. This will not only foster trust and cohesion but also facilitate understanding that may be required as both government and NGOs implement programmes in local communities.

As the need for partnerships becomes an inevitable reality, such partnerships cannot be established if there is no appreciation of the limitations of each party. Malawi's major task at hand is to establish sector networks (for example the education sector network) in alliance with CONGOMA, which should in turn, play a facilitative role in strengthening cordial relationships between government and the NGO sector.