

EDUCATION AT WHAT PRICE? A STUDY OF
LOW COST PRIVATE EDUCATION IN MALAWI

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Abstract

With the shift to free primary education resulting in greater numbers of primary school graduates, Malawi has seen an increased demand for secondary education. Limited public resources, have forced Malawians to rely more heavily on private education and especially Low Fee Private (LFP) schools.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the potential of LFP secondary schools within Malawi, through a qualitative study of four secondary schools, both public and private, within Lilongwe. This study concludes that, while significant growth of LFP schools in the future does not appear likely, the potential exists for LFP schools to improve in quality. It is important that improvements in school quality do not cause an increase in school fees and to this end schools should concentrate on improving discipline and increasing parental involvement while the government should foster greater cooperation with private schools.

List of Abbreviations Used

AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CSS	Conventional Secondary School
DEVPOL I	Development Plan 1971-1980
DHS	Dwelling House Schools
DRC	Dutch Reform Church
EDP	Education Development Plan
EFA	Education for All
HDI	Human Development Index
LEA	Local Education Authorities
LFP	Low Fee Private
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education
MCP	Malawian Congress Party
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MSCE	Malawian School Certificate of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Policies
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STR	Student Teacher Ratio
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UPE	Universal Primary Education

Acknowledgments

For my mother and father.

Chapter 1: Introduction

If we give them education then we have empowered them. We have taught them how to fish, not given them fish, because if they don't know how to fish tomorrow they will be asking for the same fish. So education is to empower them, to be creative, to actually have skills and live an independent life. In that way, it means we are making sure that we will have a brighter Malawi. (Nkata Bay Head)

1.1 Introduction

Education is not only of fundamental importance to the development process, improvements in education represent development in and of themselves. This is evidenced by the inclusion of education in development measurements such as the Human Development Index (HDI),¹ in development objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals,² and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).³ The importance of formal education to individuals and nations cannot be overstated. However, throughout most of the Global South, public school systems are vastly inadequate. In many cases, Malawi included, this has led to an increase of private sector involvement in education.

Within Malawi, the public provision of secondary education has been unable to expand quickly enough to match public demand (Rose, 2005). As a result, private schools have seen significant growth and now represent a large portion of secondary education in the country, with registered private schools alone providing 30% (Chimombo, 2009b). While private education has historically been thought of as catering solely to society's elite, in the Global South this is no

¹One third of HDI is the education component which is measured by the average number of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and the expected number of year of schooling for children of school entering age **Invalid source specified.**

² Target 2A of Millennium Development Goals: By 2015, all children can complete a full course of primary schooling (United Nations, 2014).

³ Article 26-1 of the UDHR states "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit" (United Nations, 2013).

longer the case. Throughout the developing world, including Malawi, low cost institutions catering to the middle and lower classes make up a large part of the private sector.

Using qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and observation, this study seeks to answer the question: what is the potential of Low Fee Private (LFP) secondary education in Malawi?

1.2 Research Problem

State led education provision is generally justified on the grounds that there would be an underinvestment if left to the market. However, governments of many developing countries are unable to satisfy public demand for education. As a result, the private sector has grown to fill in some of these gaps. In recent years, two key trends have influenced the growth of private secondary education. First, the debate over the role of state versus market in education provision has shifted toward greater liberalization of the education sector (Rose, 2005). This shift has led to less state regulation, opening up opportunities for private sector involvement. Second, growing popularity of the Education for All (EFA) agenda has placed greater emphasis on the expansion of public primary education. The result being a greater number primary school graduates and an increased demand for post basic education (Rose, 2005).

In 1994, Malawi became the first country, following the Jomtein Conference on Education for All, to instate universal free primary education (Chimombo, 2009a). As a direct result of this policy, Malawi's public school system saw a rise in enrolment from 1.8 million in 1993/94, to nearly 3 million in 1994/95 (Chimombo, 2009b). The introduction of this policy realigned public education funds more heavily toward the primary level. While greater numbers of children were completing primary school, funding for secondary education was not adjusted

to respond to this change (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). As a result, “the existing capacity in government and grant-maintained secondary schools has not been able to accommodate the increased demand for secondary education places” (Chimombo, 2009b, p. 168). Malawi is among the countries with the lowest secondary education participation rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a net enrolment rate⁴ of only 3% and a gross enrolment rate⁵ of only 20% (Chimombo, 2009b).

It is within this environment that private secondary education has seen a significant expansion. Although the government aims to “maximize private sector participation in secondary education” (MoEST, 2008), growth has been occurring by default rather than by government design (Rose, 2005). Private secondary education has expanded significantly in the past 20 years since universal primary education was established. In 2002, private schools were already responsible for one quarter of students entering form 1⁶ (Rose, 2005) and the private system has continued to grow through the following years (Chimombo, 2009b). Due to the substantial private sector growth, a number of legitimate concerns have been raised about the increased reliance on for-profit schools.

First, private schools are thought to be inequitable (Tooley & Dixon, 2006; Harma, 2009; Lewin & Sayed, 2005). When school fees are charged, even if the fees are low, certain members of society are excluded on the basis of affordability. Within Malawi, this is an especially large concern with 65% of the population living below the poverty line (Chimombo, 2009b). In addition to financial inequities, in Malawi there are also concerns of gender inequality where

⁴ Net enrolment rate is the percentage of secondary school aged people in secondary school.

Net enrolment rate = (SS aged people in SS / total number of SS aged people) x 100%

⁵ Gross enrolment rate is the number of secondary school students compared to the number of secondary school aged people, expressed as a percentage.

Gross enrolment rate = (total people in SS / total number of SS aged people) x 100%

⁶ The first year secondary school

“secondary school girls’ achievement is considerably lower than that of boys” (Kamwendo, 2010, p. 17). This is in large part because the benefits realized by parents are often greater with the education of a male child than with a female (Johnson & Bowles, 2010). Therefore, higher fees, which are present in the private sector, may lead to the exclusion of a greater number of female students than male, exacerbating gender inequality in education.

Second, low cost private schools are often thought to be of low quality (Tooley & Dixon, 2006). Schools that are operating at low fee levels often do not have the funds available to spend on necessary school materials such as textbooks and lab equipment, which can be quite expensive (Chimombo, 2009b). They also lack the ability to pay high wages making it difficult to attract qualified teachers who are often in short supply.

Finally, increased reliance on the private sector may undermine the public system by removing much of the pressure put on the government to improve schools (Tooley & Dixon, 2006; Watkins K. , 2004). This is thought to occur when a portion of the population opts out of the public system, especially those with civil and political power. In Malawi, this could be especially detrimental; with such a large portion of the population below the poverty line, many citizens are forced to rely on the public system.

In the past, there has been no clear policy on growth and regulation of private schools in Malawi (Chimombo, 2009b). However, in 2010, the government registered most private schools in the country and forced the closure of those that did not meet a minimum standard (Mussa, 2013). However, based on the government’s track record, it is unclear if these standards will be monitored and maintained or if regulations will go back to being ignored.

While such concerns are well founded, to dismiss private schools completely may not be a reasonable solution. Private schools, and in particular LFP schools, have come to represent

both a significant portion of current secondary education in Malawi as well as a potential source of further growth (Lewin & Sayed, 2005). This is of great importance at a time when the government is unable to provide anything close to universal secondary school access.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to create a greater understanding of the potential of LFP secondary schooling in Malawi. As an early adopter of Universal Primary Education amongst SSA nations, Malawi saw growth of LFP secondary education come earlier than did neighboring countries (Chimombo, 2009b). Therefore, research in Malawi could be used to gain insights into what may happen to LFP education in countries with similar education sectors. Most importantly, greater research should be conducted on this topic, to provide insight on the Malawian secondary education system itself. There is a significant separation between the level of education provided and what is desired by the public, and at present it does not appear as though the government is capable of filling these gaps. With the private sector in education continuing to grow, a more in-depth understanding of LFP schools becomes increasingly important.

This study aims to include the opinions and values of stakeholders from all relevant categories, each of whom view these schools from a different perspective. Only through the consideration of these various viewpoints, can the potential of LFP schools to contribute to secondary education in Malawi, be properly understood.

It is not possible to gain a complete understanding of these schools by observing them within a silo. Only by considering their role as a part of the overall (secondary) education system can they be truly understood. The comparison of LFP schools with their counterparts in the public

system reveals the advantages and disadvantages of each. As such, this study will also seek to gain a greater understanding of the public system, and more specifically Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) which make up nearly half of secondary school attendance, and function as the public system counterpart to LFP schools (MoE, 2007; Chimombo, 2009b). By considering the strengths and weaknesses of both private and public school, and analysing government policy and action toward the secondary education sector, it will be possible to assess the potential of LFP schools to contribute further to the education system through increasing provision and quality of education.

1.4 Research Question

The focus of this research is low fee private education in the Malawian Secondary Education system. The aim is to conduct a succinct study of this topic based on the following research questions.

Primary research question:

- What is the potential of LFP schools to contribute to secondary education in Malawi?

Secondary research questions

- What are the benefits and shortcomings of LFP schools according to the various stakeholders?
- What are the benefits and shortcomings of CDSSs according to the various stakeholders?
- How do LFP schools compare to public schools, mainly CDSS?
- What is the stance of the government toward LFP secondary schools, in policy and action?
- What potential exists for the secondary education system to be improved and what role should LFP roles play within this system?

This thesis argues that LFP schools have the potential to further contribute to secondary education in Malawi. Although further growth of these schools will likely be limited, there is much potential to improve school quality. However, with the level of poverty that exists in Malawi, it is important that improving schools is not associated with an increase in school fees. To this end, LFP schools should seek to improve discipline within schools, and increase parental involvement. While the government should seek to foster greater cooperation with these private schools.

1.5 Chapter Overview

The next chapter will look at the methods used to carry out the research, as well as the limitations of the study. Chapter 3 will review the concepts and literature relevant to LFP schooling. It will explore both the justifications for public involvement and the possible advantages to the private sector in education. Chapter 3 will also consider the case of LFP schools in India before these concepts are applied to the African context.

Chapter 4 will provide a brief history of education in Malawi. It will look at the three major periods in Malawi's political history and pre-history: first the colonial period, second, independence and the Banda Era, and finally, the Post-Banda Era up to the present. This historical background of Malawian education will provide a foundation on which an understanding of the current system can then be built. Finally, the current state of the education system in Malawi will be described with special emphasis on secondary schooling

Chapter 5 will present the research findings. Findings will be presented based primarily on theme, and category of stakeholder. The objective characteristics of each school are first

described to give some background. Then the individual themes are introduced before they are explored in greater detail throughout the body of the chapter.

Chapter 6 draws on the themes explored in the previous chapter and the concepts explored earlier in the paper to provide a critical analysis of LFP secondary schools in Malawi. Finally, this chapter provides a conclusion to the research project, summarizing the findings of the study. It will then go on to explore possible areas of future research, before making some concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: Methods

2.1 Introduction

In order to present a well-developed research project, I separated the investigation into two parts: a review of the literature pertaining to low cost private education throughout the developing world, and the qualitative analysis of four secondary schools in Malawi.

2.2 Secondary Research

As mentioned above, the substantial growth of LFP schools in the past 20 years has led to a great deal of research on the topic being undertaken throughout the developing world. However, formal education varies significantly throughout the Global South making much of this research either specific to a country or region, or overly generalized. Due to this, the completion of the first portion of this research required much time and attention to detail in order to sift out material relevant to the research at hand.

The literature played an important role in guiding the later stages of the research by providing an extensive background on LFP schooling throughout the world and an overview of the Malawian education system.

Gaps in the literature also guided the research, through the identification of questions that were insufficiently answered. Such questions acted as a starting point for the field research.

Although the literature review played a central role in guiding the qualitative analysis, I also remained open to new themes that arose during fieldwork. As Fetterman (1998) points out, it is important that the researcher “enters the field with an open mind, not an empty head” (p. 1). This allowed the research to be directed by the information provided by participants, rather than being dictated by preconceived notions I may have carried into the investigation.

2.3 Methods

2.3.1 Research setting

Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi was selected as the research setting for a number of reasons. From visits to Malawi in the past, I have grown familiar with the geography, culture, and to a slight degree, the language in this part of the country. This allowed the research to move forward more smoothly, especially through the early stages when first making contact with schools.

Lilongwe is an urban area giving it a higher concentration of both people and wealth. Due to the high degree of poverty within Malawi, most people are unable to afford even low cost education for their children. For this reason, private schools are much more concentrated in urban areas.

2.3.2 Setting Parameters

Upon completing an initial literature review on the topic of private education within the developing world it became clear that it would be necessary to narrow the scope of the research by setting strong parameters as to which subjects would and would not be included.

The bulk of the field research would be centered on the four schools chosen to participate, making school selection an important determinant of the direction of the research. I chose to center the study on this type of school because, during preliminary interviews it became apparent that in 2010 private schooling in Malawi went through a transformation when many of the lowest quality schools were shut down by the government for not meeting a set of minimum requirements (Chule Head; Mussa, 2013). Although no government statistics were found

revealing the extent of these closures, it is fair to assume that this event created a significant change in the makeup of the LFP sector, making original, up-to-date research all the more valuable.

In deciding the number of LFP schools to involve, I attempted to find a balance between a larger number of schools providing a more representative study and a smaller number of schools allowing for greater depth of research. To this end, I decided that three private schools would be the maximum number that could be researched in the necessary detail within the time available. These schools were selected based on the following three characteristics:

1. Ownership- privately or publicly owned,
2. Cost- the amount of school fees charged, and,
3. Funding- private, public or charity funded.

Additionally, one public school, Mkango, a Community Day Secondary School was chosen to act as basis of comparison for the three private schools. I chose Mkango based on its close proximity to the other schools involved in the research. This was done both out of convenience to the researcher, and as a method to create the greatest overlap in the populations serviced by the participating schools.

All of the LFP schools selected are owned by entrepreneurs, as a sole proprietorship or partnership. Other schools that fall outside of the public stream are mission schools or those owned and operated by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Such schools represent a smaller portion of secondary education in Malawi and while further research into these schools may be worthwhile, they were deemed to be outside the scope of this research project.

School cost was a significant consideration in the selection of the private schools. I decided to set an upper threshold of Mk 16 000 per term⁷ (approximately \$40-50 CND at the

⁷ There are three terms per year in the Malawian secondary school system.

time of research). While this number is not attached to any specific measure, such as the Malawian poverty line, it was selected as to be high enough to include a large number of schools, but low enough that schools are unable to operate at significantly lower costs. In the end, the schools selected had tuition ranging from Mk 7500 to 13 500 per term. This was equal to approximately \$20 to 36⁸ USD per term, while the Gross National Income per Capita for Malawi was \$270 USD in 2013.

All of the schools selected are funded⁹ through only school fees and the owners' personal savings. Some privately managed schools are funded partially through the government or charitable organizations. These schools represent a smaller portion of private schools and were excluded from the study to help narrow the scope of the research.

As mentioned above, a CDSS was also included in the research. This was done for three reasons. First, CDSSs are the lowest quality government schools. They generally receive the least funding, have the poorest facilities, and have the lowest percentage of qualified teachers. They are the last choice among public schools. However, it is important to point out, that they are still in very high demand, since government provision of education is exceeded by public demand. Second, CDSS and LFP schools are more likely to compete for students with each other than they are with conventional¹⁰ public schools or high cost private schools.¹¹ Third CDSSs represent the majority of public schools and therefore are more representative of the public secondary school sector as a whole than are conventional schools.

⁸ This is based on a conversion of \$1US = Mk 375, which was the approximate exchange rate during the time of the research.

⁹ This excludes the development of the curriculum and setting up of nation-wide exams, both of which are carried out by the government and likely cut down on the expenses of private schools, although they are still made to pay for textbooks and all students, public and private, are expected to pay examination fees.

¹⁰ Conventional schools are another stream of public education which are of a higher quality than CDSSs.

¹¹ Because higher cost private education as well as other streams of public education are of much higher quality it is unlikely that someone who can afford a high cost private education will go to a CDSS, and even more unlikely that someone who is selected to the other streams of public education will consider attending a LFP school.

2.3.3 Making Contact

As my field research was conducted without affiliation to any organization or group, finding and gaining access to schools appropriate for the research posed some difficulty.

Although familiar with the geography and customs of Lilongwe, I had no knowledge of particular schools in the area. In order to gain access to LFP schools I employed an abbreviated sort of snowball sampling. To begin with, I visited three well-known schools¹² located in Area 25 and Likuni¹³. At each of the schools, arrangements were made to speak with either the Headmaster/Headmistress (Henceforth Head) or Deputy.¹⁴ Although these schools were not appropriate research sites, these meetings were used to glean information concerning other schools more suited to the study, and about the Malawian secondary school system in general. This was followed by another round of school visits, which garnered the names of other LFP schools, and lead to more school visits. I assessed each of the schools during the second and third round of visits, for their viability as research sites. During this period, I also learned of a CDSS in area 25 that I later visited.

During the initial visits with the LFP schools and the CDSS, I would seek an audience with the Head to explain who I was, what I was doing in Malawi, and what I hoped to do at the school. If the Head was willing to permit the school to be included in the study then a time in the near future was set for them to be interviewed. From all of the schools visited, I selected three LFPs as research sites.

¹² The three schools were Denza Conventional Public School, Skyway Girls Private Secondary School and Likuni Boys Secondary School which is a Mission School

¹³ Area 25 and Likuni are two areas of Lilongwe

¹⁴ A Deputy is equivalent to a Vice Principle

2.3.4 Recruitment Methods

Student and teacher interviewees were recruited from classes I attended during the observation stage of the study. When a student or teacher agreed to be interviewed, a time outside of school hours was set. Interviews would typically take place on the school grounds and lasted anywhere from 20 to 90 minutes. Before the interview would commence, I asked the teacher to sign a consent form stating that they were willfully participating in the interview. Students were given consent forms at least a day before the interview so that they had extra time to read it over and consider if they wanted to participate. If a student was under the age of 18, they were also given a parental consent form that had to be signed by a parent or guardian before the student could be interviewed. Students were also given the option to be interviewed on their own or in a group depending on how they felt most comfortable.

In addition to participants from the four schools, I also interviewed two other individuals. The first was the co-founder and Head from a school in the Northern Region of Malawi, who is also involved in a World Bank task force looking at educational policy in the country. The school he ran was a successful LFP school, well equipped, with exceptional educational outcomes. Although it is an impressive example of what a LFP school could accomplish, it did not qualify to participate in the study because although the school was self-sufficient in terms of recurrent costs, it had received funding from a UK based NGO for the construction of its infrastructure. The second interviewee was the Malawian Minister of Secondary Education, Chikondano Mussa.

2.3.5 Data Collection

Due to the nature of the subject matter, I utilized qualitative research methods in order to collect data. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is used to gain a complex and detailed understanding of an issue:

This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. (Creswell, 2007, p. 40)

For this reason, I employed both observation and semi-structured interviews during field research.

2.3.6 Preliminary Data Collection

Observation was used to build upon and contextualize the secondary research that had already taken place, while also allowing new themes to materialize. I first conducted observation by sitting in on classes. In each instance, I received verbal consent to attend class by both the Head and the class teacher. The observation of classes took place over a number of days and preceded the interviews of both teachers and students. In total, I observed approximately 20 classes. Of these classes, two were at the Mkango, while the remainder were spread evenly between the LFP schools.

The purpose of observation was twofold: first, to gather information about the school and identify themes that could be explored further in interviews, and second, to allow teachers and students to become more accustomed to my presence so that they would feel more comfortable and open to sharing personal information during interviews. “Because case study observations take place over an extended period of time, researchers can develop more intimate and informal relationships with those they are observing” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 188), and it

is these relationships that contributed significantly to my ability to conduct successful interviews. Very little of the classroom observation was used in the analysis directly because I do not have education training and am not qualified to assess teaching skills.

When visiting a class for the first time, before the lesson began I would introduced myself to the students, explain why I was at the school and what I would be doing there in the future. Students were also given an information sheet providing an overview of the study, which they were able to keep and read on their own time. During classes, I recorded written notes on characteristics of the class, including, the subject, the form, the number of students, the teaching methods used and how the students responded.

2.3.7 Interviews

Interviews can be successfully used as the principal means for gathering information and in conjunction with other methods such as observation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In this study, semi-structured interviews utilizing open-ended questions were the primary source of data.

An important aspect of the fieldwork was to remain reflexive during the process of data collection. While interview guides were initially formed based off information gathered during the literature review stage of research, these were changed continuously during field research. It is important that questions change and develop throughout the research process “to reflect an increased understanding of the problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 43). This allowed new themes to appear and develop organically, and to be explored through new lines of questioning as the data dictates. In practice, when I came across a new theme during observation, while conducting an interview or during transcription, questions related to the new theme were added to future

interviews. In this way, questions were constantly added to further explore themes as they were revealed, while questions that seemed irrelevant or lead to dead ends were removed or amended.

Using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed the data provided by interviewees to be revealed naturally and spontaneously. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to construct their own meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2007). They allowed the researcher to listen to the participants, shaping the questions as a topic is explored, and allow the interviewees the freedom to address issues that they believed to be important. While using a semi-structured format permitted the interview freedom to move in different directions, guided as much by the answers of the interviewee as by the questions of the researcher.

I also conducted group interviews with students, giving them the option to be interviewed on their own or as part of a group, according to how they felt most comfortable. Discussing the questions as part of a group often made the interviewees more at ease but it also had the added advantage of allowing students to respond to the ideas and opinions of the peers, disagreeing or reinforcing their answers to the interview questions. Conversely, some students felt more comfortable talking alone with the interviewer so that they could keep their answers private. For this reason, both options were presented to the students.

In order to make sure students did not feel coerced into participating in the interview process, no student was singled out and asked to participate. Instead, the class was asked as a whole, allowing students to volunteer either individually or as part of a group. Since most students did not participate in the process, it would seem unlikely under the circumstances that any student felt forced into volunteering.

2.3.8 Data analysis

Throughout the research phase, data was being codified in a preliminary way, in order to identify themes and emerging issues. Because the research was reflexive in nature, this data helped to form and change interview questions. Upon returning to Canada, I transcribed all interview recordings and then coded using QDA Miner4, a qualitative data analysis program. As themes emerged through the analysis, it was sometimes necessary to go back and reanalyze earlier interviews with these new themes in mind. Once all of the interviews were coded and recoded to my satisfaction, the data was aggregated based on the theme and the category of interviewee.

2.4 Study Limitations

This study has a number of limitation, which restrict the application of the analysis. The limited scope of the research prevents the more general application of this analysis. The findings are not applicable to all other schools within the Lilongwe region or other urban and peri-urban centers in Malawi. With such a small sample size, this study is not meant to be representative, nor should it be taken as such.

There were further limitations associated with the participants sampled. The students interviewed were not a random sample, but rather those students who volunteered. It is likely that such students are more interested in their education than the average, and therefore, may not be representative of all students. In addition, no parents were interviewed, although their input as a stakeholder would have been of value.

It is also not fair to assume that this study is exhaustive, in that it discovered all of the issues and concerns associated with LFP education. It is likely that other concerns exist when the

characteristics of the school, region, or rural/urban settings are changed. It is also likely that there are further concerns, held by stakeholders at the participating schools that the research did not reveal. The hope is that the insights gained from this research will act as a useful instrument for the participating schools, and will contribute in a small way to the existing body of literature surrounding these themes.

2.5 Conclusion

Now that the research methods have been described, it becomes important to provide a context for the research concerning the function of LFP education. The following chapter will present the concepts and literature pertaining to LFP schooling in the developing world. To begin with, justification for public provision of education will be considered before looking at the advantages provided by private sector involvement and the forms of regulation that can be utilized to publicly manage private education. Next, the Indian example will be analyzed in order to introduce many of the concepts and points of contention particular to the literature on LFP education. Finally, these concepts are applied to the African context.

Chapter 3: A Review of the Literature

3.1 Introduction

Varying levels of private and public education provision exist throughout both the developing and developed world (James, 1993). Governments base the level of public provision on a number of social, economic and financial factors, while private institutions exist in the space allowed by government regulation, and in accordance with the demands of the public (James, 1993). It is possible to argue for the greater involvement of public or private education, with both sector maintaining certain advantages over the other. In the following chapter, I will consider the justifications for both private and public education to create a greater understanding of how each stream functions within the developing world.

3.2 Public Involvement in Education

It is possible to consider education through a various lenses. It can be viewed as a fundamental human right, a method for expanding capabilities (Sen, 1999),¹⁵ or as a means of production.¹⁶ When looking through each of these conceptual lenses, education is considered to have a different purpose. With a rights based approach, education provision is a step toward satisfying an individual's human rights, while the capabilities approach considers education to be a means of increasing a person's freedom by expanding their capabilities. On the other hand, an economic approach views education as a means of production. While the rationale behind formal education may vary greatly between these different points of view, one ideal stays relatively constant - education should be publicly provided. This is usually the case, and government acts

¹⁵ Capabilities refer to a person's opportunity and ability to generate outcomes that they value.

¹⁶ A mean of production is an economic input contributing to greater production.

as the main administrator and provider of education within both the developed and the developing world.

The rights based approach to education has had significant influence on the world stage with the Education for All initiative and the Millennium Development goals both approaching education as an unalienable human right (United Nations, 2013; 2014). Considering education in this way creates a strong justification for the public provision of education. By definition, fundamental human rights are rights to which all people are entitled. These rights are defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted by the United Nations (UN) following the Second World War, and is binding on all member states. Education is a human right as indicated by Article 26¹⁷ of the UDHR. Article 26 states that primary education will be free and compulsory, while higher levels of education, including secondary school, “shall be made generally available” (United Nations, 2013). Many countries around the world have adopted the UDHR into their constitutions, making these governments responsible for ensuring the education of its citizens (Burnett, 2008). If education was left to the market, it is likely that at least some individuals would be excluded on the basis of cost, which would be a violation of their human rights. Therefore, the best way to extend education to all members of society is for schools to be publicly run and funded.

¹⁷ A Full statement of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the UN for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (United Nations, 2013)

Considering education from an instrumentalist economic viewpoint has little in common with the rights based approach outlined above. However, an instrumentalist approach does lead to similar conclusions concerning education provision. From an economic standpoint, education has a number of characteristics that justify significant public involvement in its provision: it is a public good, its purchaser is often different from its consumer, and it has a gestation period between time of purchase and the realization of benefits (Colclough, 1996).

Education is a public good – meaning that benefits from education are realized not only by the consumer, but also for other members of society (Colclough, 1996). One well-documented example of this is the education of woman within developing countries. It has been argued that a woman’s level of education not only influences her own well-being, but also is directly correlated with the health and well-being of her children (Sen, 1999). On a wider scale, greater levels of literacy within a society are able to lower transaction costs as information is more easily distributed (Colclough, 1996).

As education benefits society as a whole, reliance on the market as the sole educational provider is not ideal. When education is privately provided, costs fall on the consumer (or their guardian as the case may be). In this instance, an individual’s desired level of education will be based on the trade-off between personal cost and benefits, while ignoring externalities¹⁸ (Colclough, 1996). In a public system, consumption of socially preferable levels of education are achieved through the public provision of free or heavily subsidized schooling.

Education, unlike most goods, is often purchased and consumed by two different individuals. Within the private sector, this frequently occurs when a parent or guardian is paying for the education of their child. This separation between purchaser and consumer can lead to sub-

¹⁸ Benefits which are external to themselves.

optimal levels of school provision within the private sector because certain benefits are not factored into the purchasing decision (Colclough, 1996). For example, a parent may base their level of investment in their child's education on the benefits they themselves expect to receive. For example, parents who run a small farm might desire their children to attend school only long enough to learn some basic skills in mathematics which are necessary for farming. After this has been accomplished, the benefits of further education may be considered by the parents to be quite low, because it will keep the child from helping at home, while for the student the net benefits of staying in school are actually quite high. In general this will lead to an under investment of education because they will not fully take into account the most significant portion of the benefits - those which accrue with the child.

The separation between purchaser and consumer has the further effect of exacerbating education inequality because the benefits realized by the parent are often not equal for each child's education. This is most evident when comparing the education of boys and girls within the developing world. In India, as well as many countries within Sub-Saharan Africa, girls enter into the family of their husband when they become married. This causes a separation between those paying for the education, the parents, and those who realize the bulk of the benefits, the girl as well as the family she marries into (Johnson & Bowles, 2010). Conversely, boys stay in the family of their parents when they become married (Harma, 2009). Therefore, benefits realized by the parents are much greater with the education of their sons than with their daughters. Therefore, when education costs are put on the parents, especially those with lower incomes, this results in inequality of education between sexes.

Education by nature has a long gestation period¹⁹ (Colclough, 1996). Since market signals²⁰ change over time, the information that is available today may be a poor indicator of what type of education will be most beneficial at the time of graduation. As such, a particular type of education may not hold the same value upon its completion when the student begins realizing its benefits. Therefore, centrally planning which types of education are most needed may be more efficient than leaving it to market signals to decide.

Such observations lead to the conclusion that the public sector is the most appropriate provider and financier of education, because when left to the private sector, a sub-optimal level of education is provided (Colclough, 1996). Historical evidence of this can be observed with the now industrialised countries, where public school systems played the dominant role in creating universal education.

Countries that developed state-funded systems of public education early on in the nineteenth century (e.g. Prussia, north-east USA, Switzerland, Holland) achieved higher levels of school enrolment and literacy earlier than countries such as England and Wales that had a limited public system until quite late in the nineteenth century. (Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006, p. 422)

The public sector is able to take into account the factors discussed above, while the private sector by nature is unable to do so. As such, a well-functioning publicly funded system, by accounting for these factors, will provide more education to more people than would be demanded within a private system. This allows space for the private sector to operate within only a few niche markets. This trend can be observed within many developed countries where private education at the primary and secondary levels only cater to upper classes and some other relatively small niches (e.g. Waldorf schools).

¹⁹ The gestation period refers to the time between the purchase of a good and when benefits are realized.

²⁰ Market signals are information passed passively or unintentionally between participants within a market. **Invalid source specified.**

In many developing countries the amount and quality of publicly provided education is very low, with many children not finishing elementary education, and those who do finish, often do not gain access to secondary school (Lewin & Sayed, 2005; Chimombo, 2009b). This is evidenced by widespread involvement of the private sector at all levels of education (Rose, 2005; Tooley & Dixon, 2006; Oketck, 2009). While an ideal system involves robust public provision and minimal private involvement, in most developing countries resource constraints do not allow governments to provide sufficient funding for an ideal education system. As a result, the presence of a large private sector represents the shortcomings of the public sector, but it is also a possible means to significantly expand and improve education.

3.3 Advantages of Privatization

Privatization, as defined by Steve Hanke, is “the transfer of public assets, infrastructure, and service functions to the private sector” (1985, p. 1). It was popularized in the late 1970’s and throughout the 1980’s in the United Kingdom and United States under the Thatcher and Reagan administrations. In turn, privatization was instated as policy in many developing countries through the influence of the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) (Steger & Roy, 2010). The main influence of SAPs on the Malawian education system was the privatization of funding through the addition or increase of school fees for public schools. There is now a strong consensus against these policies as is evidenced by the widespread acceptance of Education for All and the movement toward universal free primary education (Burnett, 2008; Chimombo, 2009b). However, the current wave of (de facto) privatization is different from that pursued based on SAPs. This wave of privatization does not imply change to the current public system, but rather the addition of a separate, competitive private sector (Rose, 2005).

In general, the rationale behind privatization is that it creates greater incentive for owners to monitor and improve their business because the businesses financial success is tied directly to the net wealth of the owner (Hanke, 1985). The key to this idea is that in the private sector, the owner has property rights over assets of the business. An owner is free to sell or trade their assets, or use them as they see fit within the confines of the law. Within a business, these assets can be used to produce goods and services (henceforth goods) that are desired by consumers. When these goods are produced at a cost below market value, profits are made. Conversely, when they are made at a cost above market value, losses are realized. These gains and losses directly affect the wealth of the owner. This creates an incentive for the owner to monitor managers and employees closely, to ensure that business is being conducted in a way that maximizes gains (Hanke, 1985). Within the public system, these same incentives do not exist as profits are effectively distributed between all taxpayers. While gains and losses are still being realized, they are too widely distributed for any individual to have sufficient incentive to monitor. It is this incentive to monitor that creates an advantage for the private sector, as it is thought to promote greater efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability (Hanke, 1985).

Within education, the presence of a strong private sector, alongside the public sector, may represent an opportunity for significant gains in both the quality and quantity of the education provided. In the past, privatization of education has traditionally been thought of in terms of two ideal types: demand side financing, and supply side reforms (Tooley & Dixon, 2006). Demand side financing usually takes the form of vouchers, either targeted or universal. Targeted vouchers are accessible to certain disadvantaged groups, while universal vouchers allow anyone who would like to access private schools to do so. Supply side reforms refer to public funding for new or existing private schools (Tooley & Dixon, 2006). However, within the last 20 plus years, the

privatization of education has taken a new form – coming into existence by default rather than by government design (Rose, 2005). While private schools are often thought of as institutions that cater only to society’s elite, these new institutions are servicing a greater range of socio-economic standings, often including the poor.

Proponents of LFP education (Karmokoias & van Lutsenburg Maas, 1997; Tooley, 2009; Tooley & Dixon, 2006) have put forward numerous benefits of private sector involvement in education including:

- Responsiveness to excess demand – enables the expansion of educational opportunities
- Provision of differentiated product relevant to consumers’ demands
- Setting of price according to ability to pay
- Accountability and cost-effectiveness
- Supplementing limited government capacity
- Better targeting of public subsidies
- Encouragement of innovation (Rose, 2002, p. 1)

Many of these benefits can be directly attributed to the profit-driven nature of the private sector.

Owners are encouraged to closely monitor their businesses with the intention of increasing profits by increasing revenue, or decreasing cost (Hanke, 1985).

Increasing the number of students at a school is one of the primary means of increasing revenue. It is for this reason that Karmokoias and van Lutsenburg Maas (1997) found that over 90% of the schools participating in their study indicated a desire to expand. Innovation and differentiation result from the need to be set apart from competitors. To attract students, private schools cater to the demands of the consumer and innovate by employing cost-effective measures to make their schools more affordable (Dixon & Tooley, 2005).

The setting of price is an important determinant of both how well a school is able to service a population, and of how successful the school is as a business. To create a market for their school, the owner must cater to the desires of consumers (Dixon & Tooley, 2005). An

important aspect of this, especially with LFP schools is setting price (and in turn quality) according to the consumers' ability to pay (Karmokolias & Maas, 1997). This allows private education to service a wide range of the public, including members of society at lower income levels. By running a school that is of lower quality (as compared to more expensive schools) a school owner is able to charge fees at a rate that is accessible to a larger part of society. Within Kenya, it has been observed that the private sector's ability to service poorer segments of society has stemmed from "the ability of private schools... to adapt their service lines to all pocketbook sizes, even small ones" (Karmokolias & Maas, 1997, p. 10).

Competition is another key characteristic of the private sector that creates significant benefits in terms of efficiency and accountability (Harma, 2009). Often within the public sector students are selected to schools based on merit or the location of their home, and are not given the option to select the school they wish to attend. Conversely, within the private sector, student and their guardians are able to choose a school as they see fit, and change schools if they so desire. This ability to 'vote with their feet' creates competition within the private sector as multiple schools vie for a limited number of students. With price being a major factor in school selection, especially for individuals at lower income levels, schools become more cost efficient in order to attract and retain students while still remaining profitable for the owner (Lewin & Sayed, 2005). For this reason, "costs per student are generally lower in the private sector" (James, 1993, p. 588). Schools are also forced to be accountable to current students and their parents or guardians, since an inability to justify their actions could result in losing students to competing schools.

Perhaps the most important aspect of private sector involvement in education is not its advantages over the public system, but rather its ability to supplement government capacity

(Chimombo, 2009b). In many developing countries, resource constraints do not allow governments the freedom to provide a level of education that satisfies public demand. Within this excess demand many private schools, and especially LFP schools, function by supplementing government education rather than replacing it. Karmokoias and van Lutsenburg Mass (1997) elaborate on this point:

Over the years, demand for education at all levels has greatly outpaced supply, a gap that has been reduced by private schools catering to the needs of a wide range of socioeconomic groups. This gap will widen further unless the private sector's role is expanded (p. v).

Similarly, private schools are able to be more responsive to excess demand. Demand for education is not static, but fluctuating and growing. In many ways private schools are better equipped to respond to these changes than is the public sector, since school owners are “driven by consumer demand” (Dixon & Tooley, 2005, p. 47). When a school owner believes that there is enough demand, they may decide to expand their school by adding on more classrooms, or another entrepreneur may enter the market by opening a new school. On the other hand, if demand was to fall, schools will shut down when enrolment becomes too low and the school ceases to be profitable. Within the public system, decision making usually is more centralized and removed from the direct experience of demand. This creates a public system in developing countries which is “too often... unresponsive to local communities need and unaccountable to parents, especially when the communities and parents in question are poor” (Watkins K. , 2004, p. 10)

It is on these grounds that private schools have been looked to in the developing world as a means to improve education, especially for low income populations who have had limited access to schooling in the past.

3.4 Modes of Regulation

Modes of regulation of private schools is a major point of contention between scholars. Pauline Rose (2002) addresses this conceptually by outlining three methods for the regulation of private institutions: self-regulation, government regulation, and outlawing private institutions. The government regulation approach, which is most frequently employed, steers between the “laissez-faire’ orientation of the first approach and the ‘rejectionist’ logic of the second” (Rose, 2002, p. 13). While most governments seem to favor the middle ground, there are a few cases in the past of the rejectionist method being employed in Tanzania and Mozambique (Rose, 2002). However, this approach is difficult to justify when the public system is not able to provide a high level of education to all citizens.

Most scholars appear to favor strong government regulation (Harma, 2009; Mehrotra, 2006; Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006; Lewin K. , 2008; Chimombo, 2009b). Since in most cases private sector growth came by default rather than government design (Rose, 2005), it is commonly thought that the state needs to take a more proactive regulatory role (Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006). According to Mehrotra (2006) the “pure private sector (unrecognized and unaided schools) is in urgent need of greater regulation, in order to improve quality in such schools” (p. 266). Contrary to this stance, Dixon and Tooley (2005) advocate a softer touch by the state. They believe that regulation represents extra costs that are put to consumers, as well as barriers to entry into the market, that in turn decrease competition (Dixon & Tooley, 2005). Although they do not agree with these assertions, Johnson and Bowles (2010) found a strong correlation between the de-regulation of the education sector in Madhya Pradesh, India and the growth of the private sector, implying that de-regulation does lead to greater competition.

3.5 The Indian Example

The majority of the LFP school literature centers on primary education in India. Although, due to the variances in education systems between different geographic regions, it is not possible to apply the Indian example directly to countries in SSA, much can still be taken from this research. While the body of this thesis will discuss secondary education in Malawi, a review of the major studies from India introduces many of the key concepts and points of contention involved in the debate.

Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006) undertook that largest survey yet conducted on LFP schools in India during 1999 and 2000. The study looked at over 1000 schools in 306 villages and 80 towns/cities covering eight states. The quantitative data was generated through a series of questionnaires that gathered an extensive data array concerning both households and schools. They found the LFP schools to be of low quality, with poorly paid and undertrained teachers. Despite this, the LFP sector showed significant growth, with middle and lower income groups preferring these schools to those in the public system. Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006) find that parents favored these schools because they begin teaching children English at an earlier age and, despite their poor quality, showed better educational outcomes than the government schools.

Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006) do not consider the schools to promote gender or income equality within education. Their findings show large variations between the enrolment of girls and boys, and between lower and upper castes. They find that the former of each pairing are less likely to be enrolled in fee-paying schools. As a result, they resolve that “private schools do not seem to be a factor favouring gender or social equity” (Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006, p. 9).

They conclude that improving the public school systems is the best direction to take toward providing universal education. Private schools should continue to be available for those students who wish to opt out of the public system; however, the government should not rely upon in an effort to provide UPE. Their findings show that LFP schools, while preferable to public schools, were providing a ‘poor alternative’ to the public system that was significantly worse. Finally, they advocate that the state take a more active regulatory role, since LFP schools, for the most part, function outside of any government regulation (Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006).

James Tooley (2003; 2009) has written extensively on the subject of LFP schools and has been involved in a number of studies (Tooley & Dixon, 2006; Dixon & Tooley, 2005). Perhaps the greatest proponent of low fee private schools’ ability to improve education and service the poor, Tooley considers LFP education to be “the poor’s best chance” (Tooley, 2004, quoted in Harma, 2009), to achieve the goals of EFA (Education for All).

The data gathered by Tooley and Dixon (2006) is in many ways consistent with that gathered by Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006). Both find that although LFP schools are of low quality, they are providing higher quality education than the public system, and that fee-paying schools are inequitable. However, despite similarities in data, the conclusions drawn by each are very different.

While Tooley concedes that LFP education is inequitable, he believes that “this need not be an insurmountable obstacle to private schools being vehicles to assist in meeting universal primary education” (Tooley & Dixon, 2006, p. 15). Comparing this to Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006) who prefer to see an improved public system taking the leading role, Tooley concludes that LFP schools can, and should, play a far more prominent part in the push to

achieve EFA goals. Tooley (2003) points out that private schools themselves often provide free spaces to some of the poorest children. This system could be expanded through a government funded targeted voucher system which could be used to provide funding to those children who are most often neglected within the current system. In this way, students from impoverished families and girls would be allowed access to LFP schools free of charge (Tooley & Dixon, 2006).

Tooley strongly disagrees with the idea that greater government regulation is needed to improve LFP schools. While Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006) believe greater government regulation is the only way to ensure private schools meet some minimum standards, Dixon and Tooley (2005) consider government regulation to represent significant barriers to entry into the education market, causing there to be fewer providers, and in turn stifling competition. In *The Beautiful Tree* (2009), Tooley gives numerous examples of regulators abusing their position for rent seeking. He talks of many well-functioning schools having to bribe officials because they are unable to comply with a set of possibly well intentioned, but poorly executed, regulations. As a result, regulations intended to benefit consumers result only in increased fees when the cost of bribing officials gets passed on to students and parents (Tooley, 2009).

It is important to note that this work has been attacked as anecdotal. In reference to *The Beautiful Tree*, Gary Natriello writes, “There is... a difference between telling a good story and providing a line of systematic inquiry substantial enough to orient policy and practice” (2010, p. 360). This comment notwithstanding, Tooley provides a possible alternative to government regulation. According to Tooley, private sector accountability exists in the relationship between the consumer and provider. This form of accountability only exists in the private system, and may be one of its greatest advantages over public education. Tooley and Dixon (2006) explain,

“in a government school, the chain of accountability is much weaker, as teachers have a permanent job with salaries and promotions unrelated to performance. This contrast is perceived with crystal clarity by the vast majority of parents” (p. 445). Tooley (2003) maintains that parents sending their children to these schools are not being duped into paying for inferior education, as some other scholars claim, but rather are operating with a strong understanding of the public and private systems. For these reason Tooley considers increased regulation as unnecessary and maybe even detrimental to educational outcomes. However, within the LFP sector where school choices are often limited, it is difficult to assess whether the schools are accountable to the families accessing their service, or exploiting poor families who have limited educational options.

More recently, Joanna Harma (2009) conducted an extensive study involving 26 private and public schools and over 250 households in Uttar Pradesh, India. Her research supported Tooley’s assertion that parents held a strong understanding of the distinction between public and private schools. In an interview, one parent stated, “private schools are good... [w]hen they take so much money then of course they teach because they have to show the parents the results of what they are paying for. With the government, there is no incentive” (Harma, 2009, p. 162). Harma agrees with Tooley that LFPs are greatly preferred to public schools within the current system; however, she differs in her assertions on how education can and should be improved.

Harma found that amongst LFP parents 64% had to cut expenses in areas such as healthcare and clothing in order to afford school fees. Similarly, Prachi Srivastava (2006) reported families forced to ration food in order to pay school fees. Parents also opined to Harma, that Private school owner could not be trusted and were liable to close down the school at any

time. It is for these reasons that, “what parents actually want is a well-functioning government school system” (Harma, 2009, p. 151).

Harma (2009) argues that concentrating on the improvement of the public sector is the best course of achieving EFA goals. She points out that historically, within developed countries, it was the public school system that played the dominant role in developing universal education. In the 19th century, those countries developed public education systems early achieved the highest enrolment rates as compared to counties that had limited public systems until late in the century. This is also confirmed in the latter half of the 20th century by the educational success of high achieving countries from the developing world. In countries with both state lead economies,²¹ and market lead economies,²² public sector has played the leading role in creating universal education (Harma, 2009; Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006). Although Tooley makes some convincing arguments in support of the private sector, historically this has not been the way forward. Harma concludes that “[p]lacing increased reliance on LFP schools will run the risk of further polarising society with the poorest remaining poor at least partly through lack of learning in ‘ghettoized’ government schools” (Harma, 2009, p. 164)

James Tooley and Pauline Dixon (2006) conducted research in India and the West Africa countries of Ghana and Nigeria, which attempt to address what they consider the major objections to LFP schools arising from within the literature. To this end, Tooley and Dixon identified three major objections to the proliferation of LFP schools: LFP schools are inequitable, LFP schools are of poor quality, and the growth of private schools will have an adverse effect on the quality of public schools. For the first of these - LFP schools are inequitable – Tooley’s views have already been discussed sufficiently above.

²¹ This includes Cuba, Vietnam, and China.

²² This includes Sri Lanka, South Korea, Malaysia, and Mauritius

The second objection – that private schools for the poor are of low quality and as such, extending access to these schools would be unfavorable, is an objection that often arises within the literature. Based on their extensive research, Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006) consider LFP schools to be a poor alternative to government schools. Watkins (2000) also finds these schools to offer such a poor service that they will “restrict children’s future opportunities” (Watkins, 2000, p. 230 as quoted by Tooley & Dixon, 2006).

According to their research, Tooley and Dixon (2006) believe this complaint to be ‘misdirected’, as findings show that although LFPs are usually of poor quality, even those that are unregistered and unregulated generally still outperform public schools. Such observations are not original and are often shared by those such as Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2006), and Watkins (2000). These scholars favor the poorer quality public system under the belief that it can be improved. In response to this, Tooley and Dixon (2006) point out that:

Parallel logic might suggest that private schools, including those unrecognised/unregistered, could also be improved to enhance their role in development, rather than, as appears to be the case in the literature, dismissed from having any role because they do not meet quality norms (p. 458).

The final objection, already voiced by Harma above, concerns the effects of private schools upon the public system. According to Rose (2002), the growth of private schools often comes as a substitute for, rather than in addition to, public services. When parents remove their children from public schools it decreases pressure on government to improve the public system, leaving those families who are unable to afford private schools to rely on a ghettoised public system. However, according to Tooley and Dixon, once the first two objections concerning equity and quality are dealt with, this third objection becomes irrelevant. If private education is accessible to all through targeted voucher programs and if the quality that is already higher than

the government standard, can be improved, it no longer matters if the public system is undermined so long as EFA goals are achieved.

A review of these studies reveals a consistency of findings that is not mirrored in the conclusions that are drawn. It appears that there is no consensus among scholars concerning the role that should be played by LFP schools. Scholars on both sides of the public-private debate provide valid arguments. Although this section does not draw any conclusions as to the way forward, it does provide background on the major points of contention surrounding LFP schools. With these arguments in mind, I will now turn my attention to the African and Malawian context.

3.6 The African Context

Significant variations exist within education systems throughout the developing world. There is a multitude of factors that have influence over the relative success or failure of formal education within a country or region. For this reason, it is important to explore a number of features specific to secondary education in much of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and for the purposes of this thesis Malawi. These factors include age demographics, GDP, and the influence of international community.

A major impediment to the provision of universal education within SSA is the number of school-age children per capita. The Age Dependency Ratio²³ (ADR) within SSA is very high compared to the rest of the world. The ADR for India was 53 in 2012, in the same year the ratio was 92 for Tanzania, 95 for Malawi, 97 for Zambia and 104 for Uganda, while the ratio for the region as a whole was 87 (Lewin K. , 2008; World Bank, 2013). This implies there are many

²³ Ratio of the number of people below 15 and above 65 (representing dependents) to the number of people 15 to 65 (representing the working class), written as a percentage. I.e. an age dependency ratio of 44, which was Canada's ratio for 2012 (World Bank, 2013), means there are 44 people total below 15 and above 65 for the every 100 people in the age range 15 to 65

more school-age children per capita within SSA than in any other region in the world. This makes the cost of universal education much greater while the number of people contributing to the tax base is much fewer.

Also adding to the relatively high cost of education, is the expenditure on teachers' salaries (Lewin & Sayed, 2005). In term of GDP per capita, these salaries are proportionately much higher in SSA than in the developed world. For example: in the UK, a teacher salary is approximately equal to the GDP per capita, while in Malawi, an average secondary school teacher's salary is more than 6 times the GDP per capita (Lewin K. , 2008). In combination, these two factors result in an extremely expensive education system that is challenging for governments of these countries to fund sufficiently.

The increased attention paid to universal primary education in recent years has created further difficulties at the secondary level. In the wake of the EFA conferences in Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000), a number of countries in Eastern and Southern Africa abolished school fees at the primary level. This includes Malawi in 1994; Lesotho in 2000; Tanzania in 2000; Uganda in 1997 (Rose, 2002). The abolishment of primary school fees has had a significant effect on primary enrolment, and in the case of Uganda, the number of primary school students nearly doubled within the first year of school fees being removed (Rose, 2002).

At the secondary level, this has had a twofold effect. First, there are a greater number of primary graduates demanding and competing for secondary education (Rose, 2002). Second, public education funds have been directed more heavily towards the primary level. Although this may be due to an increase in primary funding rather than a decrease secondary funding, secondary school funding was not increased to compensate for the increased demand, and the percentage of primary graduates transitioning to secondary school has decreased significantly

during this period (Chimombo, 2009b). The changes that have occurred at the primary level, taken together with the demographic and cost factors mentioned above, have severely limited the growth of secondary schooling in the public sector, at a time when demand for secondary education has been on the rise.

3.7 The Growth of LFP Schools in SSA

Due to the above noted difficulties in funding public education, private secondary schools “arose to fill the gaps in demand where the policy choice in these countries has been to prioritize primary schooling and limit places available in government secondary schools” (Rose, 2002, p. 8). It is within this context that the private secondary school sector has ‘mushroomed’ within many countries in SSA (Rose, 2002).

While the private sector is responding to gaps left by the public system, its growth is often met with criticism, especially in the case of schools catering to the less wealthy segments of society (Chimombo, 2009b). As mentioned above, a frequent concern is the sub-par quality of such schools. Although the private sector has greatly expanded education availability, it is often argued that LFP schools provide such a low quality of education that parents are being defrauded (Karmokoias & van Lutsenburg Maas, 1997). Regarding this, Salami (2000) states that just because parents “are willing to pay for education does not necessarily mean that they should be encouraged or permitted to do so” (p. 177). On the other hand, according to Karmokoias and van Lutsenburg Maas (1997), the fact that enrolment in these low quality private schools is done freely, there is no a priori reason to believe parents are not making a rational choice, assuming the public school option is available. However, unlike in the Indian example, these schools are usually not offered as an alternative to the government system, but rather in lieu of public access,

since places in the public system are limited and do not satisfy public demand (Rose, 2002). This makes issues surrounding school quality and value for money more complicated, since ‘consumers’ are left in a more vulnerable position when their only choices are LFP schools or no secondary education.

The equitability of private institutions is another significant concern (Tooley & Dixon, 2006). It is often highlighted that any system involving school fees excludes members of society at lower income levels. However, it may be argued that when access to public schools is limited, allowing those who desire private education to opt out of the public sector frees up spots for those students who are financially unable to access private schools. For this reason, it is possible that the inequity in private schools may increase equity in the system as a whole (Rose, 2002).

The argument is often made that private education is more cost effective for a given level of quality (Tooley & Dixon, 2006). Within the developing world, schools teachers’ salaries are estimated to make up 80% to 96% of all recurrent costs within public schools. In the case of a grade 4 teacher in Lagos state, Nigeria, the average salary in a government school is 20,781 Naira. It is only 5598 Naira in an unregistered private school and 6415 Naira in a registered private school (Tooley & Dixon, 2006). However, even when schools have a lower unit cost per student year, questions arise in terms of cost effectiveness. This is because these schools are lower quality than public schools, and will likely require a student to be educated for more years to receive a basic education. Difficulties also arise when attempting to compare the cost of inputs between private and public schools. The costs associated with public schools may be relatively easy to calculate since education expenditure is usually well documented by the government. However, calculating the cost of inputs to private education is much more difficult (Rose, 2002), since records of individual school expenditures are more difficult to obtain, and it is unclear what

public costs, such as curriculum development and state examination expenditures, should be included. For this reason, the cost of private schools is often measured in terms of tuition. This omits government funding which is often provided in the forms of tax breaks, teacher training, or curriculum design (Rose, 2002).

3.8 Conclusion

There are clearly many points of contention in the private/public debate concerning education in the developing world, which are far from being resolved. For this reason, the next chapter will narrow the scope of the research to look specifically at Malawi. To do so I will first provide a historical summary of the country's education system. Second, I will consider the current state of the Malawian education system and the public/private debate as it pertains to secondary education.

Chapter 4: The Malawian Education System, Past and Present

4.1 Introduction

The remainder of this thesis will concentrate on the Malawian education system.

Although the research that has taken place in India provides insight to the issues surrounding the LFP debate, differences between education systems of other regions limits the applicability of this data in the Malawian context.

Malawi is an important case in the study of LFP secondary education due to the rapid expansion of LFP schools that has occurred in the country during the past 20 years. It is in large part due to the increased stress put on the secondary system from the instalment of Universal Primary Education, that LFP secondary schools have seen such high growth. Following the Jomtien conference on Education for All, Malawi was the first country to adopt UPE through the removal of school fees, prompting a massive increase in primary enrolment (Chimombo, 2009a). As the first adopter of UPE during this era, the experiences of Malawi acts as a good case study for neighboring countries that adopted UPE in the years that followed, including Uganda, Tanzania and Lesotho (Rose, 2002).

Most importantly the study of LFP schools in Malawi will benefit the Malawian education system itself. Malawi has one of the lowest participation rates for secondary education in SSA (Chimombo, 2009b). Since, at present, the government does not appear capable meeting public demand for education, researching the current and future potential of LFP education is of significant benefit.

The Malawian education system has been influenced by a variety of different actors throughout its history. The system existing today is vastly different from the mission schools that introduced formal education in the colonial era. It is necessary to have knowledge of these

beginnings and the historical changes that have taken place to develop a comprehensive understanding of the current system. This chapter will provide an overview of the current education sector, in particular at the secondary level, by placing it within the cultural and historical context that has shaped it.

The history of formal education in Malawi has been heavily influenced by political changes. Each change in political regime represents both a new era of political rule, and a restructuring of the educational system. For this reason, we can roughly separate the history of Malawian education into three periods: colonial rule, the Banda era, and the post-Banda era. The colonial period was dominated by mission education while government was largely absent, providing very little assistance and often acting as a hindrance to the development of a formal public education sector (Banda, 1982).²⁴ The Banda era saw the beginning of publicly provided education by creating significant growth in education provision early on, which later plateaued (Banda, 1982). The post-Banda era has been characterized by the government's embrace of Education for All policies, and the immediate expansion of education provision, particularly at the primary level (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). The following sections will analyze the three eras, highlighting the various influences that existed in each.

²⁴ It is important to note that sources of information on Colonial Era and Banda Era education in Malawi are extremely limited, due to the specificity of the topic. It is for this reason that I was forced to rely so heavily on the text by Kelvin Banda and Christon Moyo.

4.2 The Colonial Era

4.2.1 Mission Schools

Nyasaland (modern day Malawi) was named a British protectorate in 1891. By this time, missionaries were well established in the area. It was these missions, and not the colonial government, which introduced formal education to the region (Banda, 1982). While mission schools now represent only a small portion of the education sector, for much of the colonial period they were the sole provider of education in Nyasaland, with the colonial government only opening its first school in 1929 (Banda, 1982).

When Scottish missionaries set up the first permanent outposts in 1875, they took responsibility for both the introduction, and significant growth of, formal education in Malawi. In 1907, mission schools provided education to a total of 61,712 students. In 1924 this number increased to 132,400 students (Government of Malawi, 1968), and then to 214,334 by the mid-1940s. A few years before independence, there were 263,390 students, making up 6.6% of the total population, the majority of these students attending mission institutions (Banda, 1982; Government of Malawi, 1968).

The introduction and growth of education came as a direct result of missionary involvement; however, this was never their primary goal. As in other parts of Africa, the missions' main objective was evangelism, with education viewed as a means to this end (Banda, 1982). This objective was expressed most succinctly in 1892, by a member of the Livingstonia mission who stated that "now, more than ever... our school system is, far above all else, the best evangelistic method" (Steele, quoted by Kuster, 1999, p. 213). Missions also taught Africans to service and maintain their outposts. This provided a few Malawians with a means to economic

and social advancement. However, it was only a small subset of missionaries who considered education to be a means to uplift Malawians in this way.

According to Kuster (1999), it was the Scottish missions and in particular, the Livingstonia mission that made the greatest contribution in terms of quality and quantity of education in the period before the First World War. What made these schools exceptional was their inclusion of advanced courses in both technical and academic subjects. In 1894, they opened the Overtoun Institution, a well-equipped school designed to train students in a number of skilled professions including teachers, pastors, medical assistants and apprentices in various trades. Education from this school was of an advanced level and superior quality in comparison with other schools. Graduates from the Overtoun Institute dominated skilled and semi-skilled positions in the administrative and commercial sectors throughout the Northern Region of Malawi (Kuster, 1999). Nevertheless, the depth and quality of the Livingstonia mission schools were an anomaly within the protectorate at this time.

Dutch Reform Church (DRC) missions functioned during the same period as the Livingstonia mission, with operations focused in the central region. The DRC rejected the idea of teaching Africans skills that would be of use in the commercial sector and instead concentrated on “raising the moral and physical standards of life in African villages” (Kuster, 1999, p. 287). For these purposes, the teaching of English was seen as irrelevant and advanced secondary education was considered undesirable because it would produce educated Africans who would compete with Europeans for employment in skilled and semi-skilled positions (Lamba, 1984). Unfortunately, the DRC’s model of education was much more common than that of the Scottish missions and would become the dominant education paradigm in Malawi throughout the colonial era.

As result of the differences in education paradigms between missions, education throughout Nyasaland varied greatly from region to region. While some people received a comprehensive education from the Livingstonia Mission, others received a more basic education from the DRC or another mission. Most Africans in the region received no formal education. For this reason, the northern region, where the Livingstonia and other missions were located, educational expansion moved faster than in the central and southern regions (Rose, 2003).

4.2.2 The Colonial Government and Education

As mentioned above, during the colonial era the protectorate was, for the most part, absent from the education system, leaving it largely in the hands of the missions. While the protectorate did become more involved with education over time, this was more as a means to control the education provided by missions, than as a way to become an education provider to any significant extent (Banda, 1982).

It was not until 1929, 38 years into the colonial period, that the government founded its first school - the Jeanes Training Center (Banda, 1982). Though the school was government run, its financing came primarily through a grant from a US charity. Jeanes was less of an academic institution than it was a community development center, conforming to the Phelps-Stokesist²⁵ concept of education that was popular with the colonial government at the time (Banda, 1982). It took another ²² years for a second government school to be established. While, the protectorate

²⁵ The Phelps-Stokesist concepts of colonial education formulated by Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, was propagated throughout Nyasaland in the 1920s and 30s. This model was based on the idea that forms of education put into place in the Southern United states for African-Americans were also suitable for colonized Africans and was in many ways similar to those practiced by the DRC missions. In the Phelps-Stokesist model, education would be based on the teaching of health, home life training, industry (mainly agriculture) and recreation, and stressed the need to adopt education to village life and community development. Although Dr. Jones conducted much research within Africa, he subscribed heavily to Social Darwinist notions and based much of his recommendations on preconceived notions of African 'backwardness' (Kuster, 1999).

did provide grants to some of the mission schools, the amount was insignificant compared to non-governmental education expenditure. In 1960, just four years before Malawi gained independence, there were only 4042 students attending government schools, representing less than 2% of school positions within the protectorate (Banda, 1982).

The protectorate government's absence from the education provision was a conscious decision, influenced by a number of factors. The first of these being the protectorate's lack of capital. Nyasaland's extremely small economy and London's policy that colonies should be financially self-sufficient (Banda, 1982), left the protectorate very little capital to spend on social services such as education. Had the government been inclined to develop the education system, they would have been constrained by severe financial limitations.

The settler community in Nyasaland was another source of influence leading to limited government involvement in education. The government considered economic development of the territory to be of the utmost importance and this depended on the success of the European-run plantations. For these plantations to succeed, a steady supply of cheap, unskilled African labour was necessary, making the education of Africans unnecessary and even detrimental to economic growth (Banda, 1982).

The third anti-education influence was the Chilembwe Rising, a revolt against one of the estate farms, orchestrated by John Chilembwe and a few other educated Africans. Chilembwe was a mission-educated African who attended Seminary College in the United States. While the rising only lasted a couple of days, it resulted in the death of several Europeans. The protectorate government responded to the rising with swift military action executing many of the Malawians involved, and later shutting down all of the schools in the area (Banda, 1982).

4.2.3 African Provision of Education

While the missions were the main provider of education in the protectorate, some Malawians also opened schools despite having access to limited resources. Upon his return to Nyasaland from the United States, John Chilembwe set up his own mission as well as a number of schools (Banda, 1982). While these schools were short lived, being burned down soon after by management of the nearby plantation, they represented one of the earliest examples of African provision of education within the protectorate.

Another such initiative came as a response to the DRC missions' exclusion of English education from their village schools (Lamba, 1984). The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) formed new schools that were funded in good part by Hastings Banda, who was living outside of the country at the time. With Banda's financial support AMEC opened a number of schools operating within the DRC's sphere of influence. Due to the inclusion of English in these schools' curriculum, many parents enrolled their children at an AMEC school, transferring them out of the schools run by the DRC (Lamba, 1984).

While the school system during the colonial era was provided by the missions rather than publicly, the African run schools mentioned above were, in essence, the first instances of private schooling, developed as a response to deficiencies within the prevailing system.

4.3 Post-Colonial Period: the Banda Era

4.3.1 Public Education

While Malawi did not gain full independence until 1964, beginning in 1961 changes in the government put more power in the hands of Malawians. This manifested mainly in the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and party leader Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda (Banda, 1982).

With this transformation in government came significant changes in the education policy. While the colonial government had shied away from education provision, the new Ministry of Education (MoE) (1961) stated:

The education policy which the Government proposes is based on Nyasaland's urgent need for trained men and women in every walk of life, a need which must be met if the economic and social development of the country is to match its constitutional advances (Moyo, 1992, p. 266).

MoE policy during this time drew its roots largely from the manifesto of the MCP. While the manifesto addresses all levels of education provision, it places special urgency on the needs of the secondary system. The MCP saw the provision of secondary education as being far from satisfactory and pledged to take immediate steps to:

- Provide increased opportunities for secondary education (including standard XI and XII) and
- Provide bursaries and/or loans to all needy but deserving boys and girls to finish their secondary education and will encourage the Local Government authorities to do the same.
- As in all other aspects of education, the Party will pay particular attention to women's secondary school and towards this end will take immediate steps to expand facilities at the Lilongwe Government Secondary School for Girls. (MCP manifesto, 1961, in Banda, 1982, p. 104)

During the same period, UNESCO organised a number of conferences including one in Addis Ababa in 1961. While the conference stated the aim of achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 1980, expansion of secondary education was seen as crucially important in the immediate future (Moyo, 1992). This was based on the central role of secondary education within the education system, giving primary graduates opportunities, feeding graduates to the tertiary stream and supplying the school system with teachers for further expansion.

Further corroborating these sentiments were two commissions formed to look at aspects of Malawian education. The Phillips Commission was formed in 1962, with the Johnston Report

following in 1964 (Banda, 1982). The findings of the commissions were strikingly similar to the sentiments expressed by the new government concerning secondary education. In addition, the Johnston Report also stressed the need for expansion of the education system by giving it a higher proportion of government expenditure than it enjoyed at the time. It does not seem that this aspect of the report was followed by the MCP (Banda, 1982).

While each of these authorities – the MCP, UNESCO and the two commissions – all supported UPE as the ultimate goal, slow steady progress towards this goal over the long term was usually advocated due to the high cost of rapid expansion (Banda, 1982).

Another change that occurred during this time was a new education law concerning Local Education Authorities²⁶ (LEAs). This change was aimed at bringing the law in line with the current education system, where most schooling was not provided by the federal government, but rather by LEAs (Moyo, 1992). The change gave LEAs a greater degree of autonomy, and by placing greater authority with these local schools, it allowed the government to concentrate more of their efforts on secondary and tertiary education. In the National Development plan (1962-64), 43% of the total education expenditure was allocated to secondary education and 26% to higher education (Moyo, 1992).

Rapid expansion of the secondary school system started before 1964 and continued through the first decade of independence. In 1961, total secondary school enrolment was 1713, while in 1964, on the eve of independence, 1583 pupils entered Form I²⁷ alone. This number more than doubled in the first 4 years of independence and by 1974, the total number of students attending government secondary schools was 12,101, while another 1516 were attending unaided

²⁶ LEAs were simply local authorities that were encouraged by the federal government to form and take responsibility for the basic (primary) education for the area in which they operated, effectively absolving the federal government of the responsibility.

²⁷ Form I is the first year of the four-year secondary school program.

mission secondary schools. Although rapid growth of the secondary system was achieved during this period, the percentage of school-aged children attending secondary school remained extremely low (Moyo, 1992).

The 1968-1970 Development Programme aimed at achieving rapid growth of national income through investment in directly productive projects (Moyo, 1992). As a result, education was largely ignored during this period with only 11% of government expenditure going to social services and housing (which included education), while 43% was allocated to transport and communications, and 23% to agriculture and natural resource projects (Moyo, 1992).

It appears that education may have been deliberately underfunded to maintain the supply of cheap unskilled labour to the estates and the manufacturing industry, maintaining the status quo from the colonial period (Moyo, 1992). The 1960s and 70s saw the development of agricultural estates owned by Africans, often politicians and high level civil servants, who gained from continued access to cheap labour. Education provision may have also been adversely effected by consideration of maintaining political and economic stability. Since education was serving to fill the shortages of skilled labourers needed for the modern sector that was still quite small, it was thought that a surplus of qualified school leavers would migrate to urban areas increasing youth unemployment and with it the potential for civil unrest (Moyo, 1992).

The first Education Development Plan (EDP) developed in 1973, largely followed the goals of DEVPOL I. It shared many characteristics with the plans that came before it, but also stated the goal of achieving a more equitable distribution of education. Much of the unequal distribution of education between different regions was a legacy of the colonial era, when mission provided education was more concentrated in some regions than others. Since education provision also created greater demand for more schools, these imbalances were self-perpetuating.

Other sources of imbalance were between urban and rural centers, and between girls and boys, with urban centers and males receiving a greater share of education resources. Although significant gains have been toward equality in these areas, the rural/urban and male/female biases are still significant sources of inequality today.

4.3.2 Structural Adjustment Policies

In the late 1970s, Malawi's economy fell into crisis, forcing the government to adopt Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) (Rose, 2003). SAPs were set according to the Washington Consensus that advocated increased economic liberalization and a significant decrease in public expenditure. Although these reforms prioritized education, public recurrent expenditure on education fell from 14% in the mid-1970s, to only 9% a decade later (Rose, 2003).

One of the goals of education reform was “[i]mproving equity of education by increasing the relative share of primary education while decreasing the share of higher education” (Moyo, 1992, p. 291). This World Bank policy was based on various studies from that time which considered rates of return for the three levels of education: primary, secondary and post-secondary. Conceiving education in terms of human capital, the key findings of these studies were that rates of return were greatest for primary level education and lowest for post-secondary, and that returns were highest in poorer countries and with girls. These studies also found that rates of return were higher on education than they were on physical capital (Rose, 2003). Despite this ideological shift, causing policy to change in favor of primary education spending, the increase in primary funding could not keep pace with enrolment. While enrolment increased

significantly between the early 1970s and early 1990s, spending per student decreased by more than a third (Moyo, 1992).

Research by the World Bank concluded that Malawi satisfied the conditions of having excess inelastic demand, noting higher rates of enrolment in the northern region that was also poorer (Rose, 2003). They claimed this was evidence that students were absent from school not because of an inability to pay, but due to a shortage of school places. However, as mentioned above, greater rates of education in the northern region was more likely a legacy of missionary education than evidence of excess demand (Rose, 2003). Based on the Bank's faulty analysis, school fees were increased and as a result, enrolment declined for the next two years (Rose, 2003). Furthermore, because spending per student decreased during this time, the increased fee income replaced government funding rather than supplement it.

It is generally accepted that the reforms executed based on SAPs during the 1980s did not have a positive effect on the Malawian economy (Rose, 2003). However, at the time the World Bank attributed the failures of SAPs to the Malawian government, claiming that the government had implemented the policies incorrectly and urging for political reform. Due to pressure put on the Malawian government by international agencies and threats to withhold non-humanitarian aid, democratic elections were held in 1994 (Rose, 2003). The resulting shift in government ushered massive change in the Malawian education system eventually leading to the system that is in place today.

4.4 The Post Banda Era: 1994 to present.

4.4.1 The Change to Universal Primary Education

In 1994, the Malawian education sector and the country as a whole, entered a new era of multi-party democracy. Although the overriding aim of education – the economic and social development of the country – stayed constant, the reorganization of the Malawian government coupled with the push of the international community toward Universal Primary Education, caused a realignment of educational policy. This realignment directed more funding and attention toward primary education.

Under international pressure, Malawi had its first multiparty election in 1994. Many of the parties during the election, including the eventual winners the United Democratic Front (UDF), made UPE through the abolition of all school fees part of their campaign platform. Upon winning the election, the UDF, under the leadership of the new president Bakili Muluzi, immediately fulfilled this pledge (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). At this time Malawi became the first country to instate universal free primary education following the Jomtein Conference on Education for All, and as a result, the public school system saw a rise in enrolment from 1.8 million in 1993/94, to nearly 3 million in 1994/95 (Chimombo, 2009b).

Along with this 65% increase in enrolment came a marked decrease in school quality. While government expenditure on primary education did increase significantly, it was not proportional to the increase in enrolment, causing expenditure per pupil to decrease by about 25 percent. Although the number of teachers was increased in proportion to enrolment, this was accomplished through the recruitment of approximately 18,000 untrained teachers, making the majority of primary school teachers unqualified (Al-Samarrai & Zaman, 2007; Rose, 2003).

The enactment of UPE greatly increased educational equality between the rich and the poor. In the years before the abolition of school fees, school participation was significantly greater, approximately double, for those belonging to the highest quintile of income, compared to those belonging to the lowest (Al-Samarrai & Zaman, 2007). After 1995, enrolment became almost even between income brackets, although inequality between male and female enrolment persisted.

These massive changes in the education system resulted from a number of influences both national and international. First, multiparty democratic elections forced politicians to become more receptive to public opinion. As a response to demands of the electorate, many of the parties running in the election supported free primary education (Rose, 2003).

Second, international opinion had recently shifted towards UPE through the removal of school fees (Rose, 2003). Education for All, a UNESCO initiative, had its first conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, following which Malawi was the first country to instate universal primary education (Al-Samarrai & Zaman, 2007). The EFA initiative held its second conference in Dakar in 2000, to reaffirm the goals set in 1990. The Malawian EFA National Action Plan (2004) notes both of these conferences as having influenced their current policy position. In addition, in the same year as the Dakar conference, the Millennium Development Goals were established with Universal Primary Education as the second objective (United Nations, 2014).

Such changes in international opinion not only influenced the Malawian government's decision, but also provided them with a significant source of funding to implement UPE (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). After implementation, donor funds represented up to 40 percent of Malawi's education budget (Rose, 2003). In the Malawian Education for All National Action Plan a number of international donors which support their efforts are listed, including: Action

Aid, Asian Development Bank, Canadian International Development Agency, Department For International Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency, United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank and other contributing partners (Malawi, 2004).

4.4.2 Primary Education

Primary education in Malawi lasts eight years, starting in standard one when the student is six years old and continuing through to standard eight. Completion of the primary level is achieved with a passing grade on the standard eight nationwide examination. While standard one enrolment is nearly universal, Malawi is still a long way from achieving universal primary completion.

Implementation of UPE resulted in massive growth of primary school attendance, and while more students are graduating from primary school, dropout rates are extremely high, with many children leaving school before they have achieved proficient skills in literacy and numeracy. In the early 2000s, half of the children who started school dropped out before finishing standard 3 and less than 20% were graduating from the primary system (Rose, 2003). While primary completion has seen significant improvement, only 32% were graduating from primary school in 2007 (Chimombo, 2009a). Low retention rates were evident before the implementation of UPE, so this is not necessarily a symptom of the new system; however, significant improvements must be made, before all, or even most, children receive a minimum standard of education.

Brossard (2010) claims that the low retention rate was attributed to a low educational demand; however, it is likely that low demand is greatly influenced by the poor quality of education provided. For example, the student teacher ratio (STR) is 80:1 which is significantly

higher than in 2000 when it was 63:1. Although, substantial improvements have been made in the number of qualified teachers, with the student to qualified teacher ratio (SqTR) improving from 118:1 in 1999 to 88:1 in 2007, this is still extremely high. Further exacerbating issues of a high STR, teachers were inconsistently distributed making it quite common for classes to have more than 100 students (Brossard, 2010).

While private education exists at the primary level, it is not common due to the universal provision of primary education from the public system and the high level of poverty within the country. Private education at the primary level generally results from quality demand,²⁸ and caters only to those who can afford to pay for a higher quality education than is offered in the public system. In Malawi, this represents only a small minority of the population.

4.4.3 An Overview of Secondary Education

Implications of UPE extend beyond of the primary sector. The considerable increase in the number of students graduating from the primary stream has also placed significant strain on the secondary system, leading to changes in the public sector as well as the ‘mushrooming’ of private secondary education (Rose, 2005).

The secondary level of education lasts four years, starting directly after the completion of primary school. It starts at form 1 and is completed when a passing grade is achieved on the form four nationwide examination. A nationwide exam that must also be successfully completed at the end of form two, before a student may continue into form three.

²⁸ Quality demand occurs when students opt out of the public system preferring the private system that is perceived to be of higher quality.

The secondary education system is characterised by a number of different types of schools. The public sector can be roughly separated²⁹ into two school types: Conventional government secondary schools (CSS) and Community Day secondary schools (CDSS). CSS are fully funded³⁰ government schools, of relatively high quality and in high demand. However, they only represent a small portion of schools, supplying less than one quarter of the secondary education in Malawi (Chimombo, 2009b).

In addition to CSS, the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) was established in 1965 (Chimombo, 2009b). The MCDE comprised of a large number of distance learning centers, partially funded publically and partially through school fees accounting for more than 60% of recurrent costs. Enrolment in these schools grew rapidly in the 1990s, exceeding 180,000 with an average pupil to teacher ratio of 84:1 in 1997 (Rose, 2005). In 1998, MCDE schools were converted to Community Day Secondary Schools. CDSSs do not operate as distance education centers like their predecessors, but rather resemble conventional schools, albeit with lower levels of funding and fewer qualified teachers. While conventional school are fully funded by the government,³¹ public funding for CDSSs covers only teachers' salaries, while all other expenses are paid for through school fees and community donations. In the past, pass rates in these schools were exceedingly low: of those who enrolled only 5% of males and 1% of females were graduating (Chimombo, 2009b). For this reason, the government capped class size at 45 pupils, leading enrolment to drop significantly in the early 2000s. In 2003, the number of pupils was approximately half what it was in 1999, making enrolment selective rather than open.

²⁹ There are also National and District schools, though these are small in number and resemble Conventional schools with better funding.

³⁰ While teacher salaries, infrastructure and school materials are supplied by the government, these schools still charge tuition to cover other costs, such as food and boarding.

³¹ This includes teachers' salaries, learning materials, building and maintenance cost.

(Lewin & Sayed, 2005; Chimombo, 2009b). These schools now represent approximately half of secondary schools enrolment in Malawi (Chimombo, 2009b), and although a greater percentage of students now graduate from CDSSs, they are still characterized by poor quality and low pass rates on standardized government exams (Rose, 2005).

Teacher distribution is more consistent within the secondary system than at the primary level, where there is less variation in class size. While the student to qualified teacher ratio is also significantly better, this hides the variation between the two secondary level streams. In comparison to 73% of teachers being fully qualified in conventional secondary schools, only 19% of teachers in CDSSs are fully qualified (Brossard, 2010). It is not surprising that the former produce vastly superior pass rates.

There is also a difference in the physical facilities of the two school types. CSS are generally held in purpose built buildings that are financed and constructed by the government, while CDSSs classrooms are more often built by the community in which they operate. These buildings are generally of poorer quality, and often use structures that were originally built for other purposes and retro fitted.

The introduction of UPE in 1994 meant a realignment of public education funds directed more heavily towards the primary level, and away from secondary and tertiary education. Since 1994, as much as 65% of the recurrent education budget has been allocated to the primary level. Although Malawi's total education budget increased with funding from international agencies, the amount allocated to the secondary system has been insufficient to respond to increased demands for secondary schooling stemming from the increase of primary school graduates (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). In 2007, only 22% of recurrent education spending was allocated to secondary education (Chimombo, 2009a). It is within this environment that private secondary

education has seen significant growth, and now accounts for approximately 30% of secondary education (Chimombo, 2009b).

The difference between government and non-government schools are often blurred since some non-government run schools receive public funding, and government schools often charge fees (Lewin & Sayed, 2005). In Malawi, private schools are those that are privately managed and for the majority of these schools teacher salaries, school materials and infrastructure are funded exclusively through school fees and the owner's personal savings.

In general, pass rates for private school students sitting the form 4 examinations are slightly lower than that of public schools students. In 2006, pass rates were 43% for private schools and 48% for public schools (Kamwendo, 2010). However, these numbers hide the variation between different types of schools in both the public and private systems. While the discrepancy between school types in the public sector is quite pronounced, variation is even greater in the private system. In general, we can separate non-government run or private schools into three categories: established private schools, Church or Mission run schools, and LFP schools.

Established private schools are run in "purpose built buildings with a range of school facilities similar to those of conventional schools" (Chimombo, 2009b, p. 169). These are generally expensive schools, often outperforming Conventional Secondary Schools. International schools are a small subset of established schools that are extremely high priced. They resemble private schools in the developed world and function at a significantly higher quality than CSS.

Mission run schools have existed in Malawi since the colonial period, although they no longer play such a key role as they did before independence. Some mission run schools are aided by governments grants, while other rely only on tuition fees and outside assistance. Altogether,

Mission schools currently represent only a small portion of the secondary school sector in Malawi.

Most of the growth in the private sector has come from low fee schools. Dwelling house schools (DHSs), the cheapest and poorest quality of these schools, have been the variety of LFP most often addressed in the literature. These were schools run by petty business entrepreneurs, often occupying space in or adjacent to the owner's home. Such schools were mostly unregistered and did not meet government regulation, which resulted in their widespread closure by regulators in 2010. Although most LFP schools now operate out of purpose built structures, they still share many characteristics with DHSs. They are the poorest quality private schools and compete with CDSSs for students (Chimombo, 2009b). Dwelling house schools were often overcrowded with classes of upwards of 100 students. In one instance Chimombo observed a class where "150 students were packed so tightly in a room such that it would have been difficult to write, never mind undertake any activity" (2009b, p. 178). Despite the exceedingly poor quality of LFP schools, they still operate at a fee level that Lewin and Sayed (2005) estimate to exclude those below the 20th decile of wealth, since in Malawi 65% of the population fall below the poverty line.

The combined effort of all secondary education, both public and private, only results in the graduation of 14% of Malawians, which is below the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) average, of approximately 17% (World Bank, 2010). Although only a small percentage of Malawians receive their secondary school certificate, very few are able to gain access to continued education.

4.4.4 Private Education in Malawi

While literature on LFP schools in Malawi is limited, a few authors have written on the topic. Lewin and Sayed (2005) carried out their analysis in order to provide a greater understanding of private schools in Malawi in terms of their current range of operation, the policy framework in which they operate, and their likelihood for further growth. Similarly, Joseph Chimombo (2009b) conducted research with the aim of developing ‘policy-relevant insights’ concerning the range of both public and private secondary provision, and how the private sector was developing to meet demand for secondary schooling. The research by Lewin and Sayed highlights a number of observations and concerns regarding the growth of the private sector, many of which were echoed in Chimombo’s work.

Private schools have been responsible for a significant increase in secondary school access. Statistics from the Ministry of Education report the number of secondary students in private schools to be approximately equal to the number in conventional government schools, and that even this is likely a gross underestimate (Chimombo, 2009b). Established private schools³² cater only to wealthy families of students who did not gain access to the conventional government schools. However, low quality LFP schools have made up a larger portion of the private sector growth in the past years. Although LFP schools are often preferred to CDSSs due to the low quality of CDSSs, LFP schools often operate under ‘appalling conditions’ (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

Within the private sector, income inequality amongst the student’s families is prevalent. Gender equality, in terms of enrolment rates, is better than in the public sector. However, this

³² Established private schools are expensive, high quality schools comparable to conventional public schools.

may only be evidence that wealthier families can afford to educate both male and female children (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

Private schools have contributed significantly to secondary school provision in Malawi. However, further growth of this segment is unlikely to be substantial. The main factor driving past growth has been consumer demand, but with 80% of Malawians unable to afford school fees, demand is limited. In order to realize further growth in the private sector “[t]here is need for a considered policy to steer the growth of the private sector to the limits of parental affordability” (Chimombo, 2009b, p. 182).

While private schools are often thought to promote more efficient use of scarce resources, in Malawi data available to make such judgments is scarce and varied. There are great differences in quality between schools, and while some manage time and resources well to achieve positive results, others simply extract income from the poor, providing very little in exchange (Lewin & Sayed, 2005). According to Lewin and Sayed (2005), where quality is low, regulation and monitoring may have some value when enforced. In the lower cost schools, quality can be most readily improved through the provision of learning materials, most notably textbooks (Chimombo, 2009b).

The output of the Malawian training system for secondary school teachers is drastically insufficient. Teachers in LFP schools are mostly untrained and CDSSs cannot be supplied with enough teachers within the foreseeable future. For this reason, arrangements that exclude teachers, outside the public system, from accessing training should be reviewed and amended (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

Management in LFP schools is often not conducive with effective teaching, stemming from a lack of transparency and weak community engagement (Lewin & Sayed, 2005). Until

management and accountability issues are addressed, it is hard to conceive how public-private partnerships could be undertaken (Chimombo, 2009b). Part of this problem is due to a lack of legislation, fostering perceptions that education can be dispensed anywhere and by anyone regardless of training. Although steps have been taken recently by the government through the forced closure of schools not meeting a minimum standard, without continued monitoring and enforcement of such regulations it is unclear whether continued growth of the private sector should be encouraged (Lewin & Sayed, 2005).

Lewin and Sayed (2005) conclude that private providers may be ‘encouraged and supported’ through:

- The assessment and monitoring of facilities and staff to ensure schools are up to a minimum standard for registration and licensing.
- An agreement on the standards for public accountability including financial transparency and performance indicators, and
- The development of mechanisms for quality assurance.

Chimombo (2009b) adds that there is a need to establish norms for school fees, teacher wages and discipline. If these conditions can be met, then some form of government subsidy or support for the private sector could be considered. The most obvious and attractive of these being an increased supply of learning materials.

Pauline Rose (2002), writing in a similar vein to the authors above, summarizes private secondary schooling in Malawi as follows:

While it is undeniable that the non-state sector has played and will continue to play a role in education, this should not be seen as an alternative to the state’s role in providing for social needs. There is a need to strengthen the role of the state in financing, provision as well as regulation if the poor are to have access to schooling of acceptable quality at different levels, and be protected from the poor quality private provision which is becoming increasingly prevalent (p. 17).

4.4.5 Tertiary Education

Tertiary education in Malawi is exceedingly inefficient having low rates of enrolment and high costs. With 27% of the recurrent expenditure for education going to the tertiary level, the government spends more on university education than the SSA average of 21% (World Bank, 2010). Over 80 percent of tertiary expenditure comes from public funding, while less than 10 percent comes from school fees. However, even with high public spending, access to post-secondary education is extremely limited. Tertiary enrolment in Malawi is one of the lowest in SSA, at 51 per 100 000, compared to the average of 337 per 100 000 (World Bank, 2010). Though tertiary level enrolment within Malawi has seen a significant increase, doubling between 2004 and 2008, this has been due in part to the enrolment of non-residents (World Bank, 2010). Although post-secondary education is mostly funded publicly, removing a major barrier to participation for those belonging to lower income brackets, it is still extremely inequitable. Admittance into public universities is based primarily on Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) marks. Those who achieve the highest marks on the MSCE are students that have advantages throughout their education, such as better schools, textbooks, tutors, and time to study rather than working in the fields. As a result, 90% of students admitted to public university come from the wealthiest 20% of the population (World Bank, 2010). This means a significant part of the public education budget is spent almost exclusively on the students from higher income families.

4.5 Conclusion

Considering the origins and evolution of schooling within Malawi provides an important context for understanding the education sector today. While the education system in Malawi has

been evolving constantly, it has also experienced rapid transformations correlating to political shifts that have occurred within the country. Although the availability of education has increased greatly over time, and in particular during the most recent period, the education system still does not provide an acceptable quality of schooling to the majority of Malawians. While the schooling provided is currently inadequate at all levels, this is especially true of the secondary level where improvements must be made in both quality and provision of education.

Within this context, the private education sector and especially the LFP sector has seen significant growth. Although LFP schools have contributed significantly to education provision within Malawi, this has been accompanied by concerns regarding quality and equity of access to education. With the private sector playing such a significant role within secondary education, it is important to create a better understanding of these schools so that their contributions may have the greatest possible benefit.

Chapter 5 Findings: Low Free Private Schools in Practice

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to construct an understanding of the three LFP schools and one CDSS participating in the study. These schools act as a basis for the research, providing insight into the role LFP schools through the observations of the researcher, the interviews with stakeholders and comparative analysis with the public sector, along a number of thematic lines – specifically school selection, parental involvement, teacher quality and cost efficiency. Through the exploration of these themes, a greater understanding of LFP schools to contribute to secondary education will be achieved, in order to answer the question – what is the potential of LFP secondary education in Malawi?

To begin with, some basic information will be provided for each of the schools and interviewees involved. This will provide a context for the schools, highlighting the key similarities and differences between them. This chapter will also provide a background for the students and teachers interviewed. Next, the chapter will consider the criteria by which students select their school. This topic will act to introduce several themes analyzed throughout the majority of the chapter.

In addition to themes related to school selection the body of this chapter will also discuss a range of other themes that recurred in many interviews. To provide a balanced understanding of each theme, viewpoints of a variety of relevant stakeholders will be considered. These themes will include teacher quality, cost efficiency, and parent involvement.

Some of the themes discussed in the chapter, such as school quality, tuition, and bursaries, have been addressed in the wider scholarly literature and touched upon in chapters 3 and 4. For these themes, this chapter aims to further the discussion by adding original data, based

on a greater depth of research. This is accomplished using analysis that stems directly from the insights of stakeholders. Other themes, such as discipline and parental involvement, are new to the discussion and have had little or no exposure in the literature. For these topics, the following discussion is a stepping off point, an introduction to themes that I believe should garner greater attention in the future. Although the discussion that follows is far from exhaustive and all-encompassing, it does provide an original point of view and new ideas which can further the understanding of LFP education.

5.2 The Schools

Four schools participated in the study, three private schools: Chule, Njati and Pleasant View Academy, and one public CDSS: Mkango. It was from these schools that interviewees including students, teachers, Heads and school owners, were selected. This section includes an introduction for each school, describing the location, physical structures, and management structure of each school, as well as some basic information about each interviewee.

5.2.1 Location and Physical Structure

Each of the schools selected for this study are located within Lilongwe in one of two peri-urban areas away from the city center. Of the four schools, Chule is located in Likuni, while Njati, Pleasant View and Mkango – are located in Area 25.

All of the participating schools have similar physical characteristics. None are boarding schools, so there were no bunkhouses or cooking facilities. Each school has four classrooms, one for each form, and a separate room for the teachers' office. Additionally, each school has shared male and female pit latrines, and all but one, Pleasant View, have a water tap on school grounds.

Njati is the only school that has a library, and none have a laboratory. All of the schools were ‘under construction’ to some degree, with partially finished classrooms, libraries, or offices, although construction was rarely, if ever, observed during research. It is unclear how long construction had been going on at each school; however, there was never any indication that it was soon to be completed.

Chule is located in a residential area of Likuni, away from any major roads or markets. A brick fence fully encircles the school, preventing foot traffic from traveling through the school grounds. The school has four functioning classrooms, but it also has structures³³ built for four more. These unfinished structures have been used in the past, but not since the school reopened in 2010. Similar to the other schools in the study, Chule does not have a laboratory. However, according to the school’s Head, he sometimes takes the students to the neighboring public school³⁴ to use their facilities.

Njati is located away from the central market of Area 25. While it is on one of the few roads in that area, the school is not often disturbed by foot traffic or the sound of traffic on the road. However, a maize mill is located next to the school, which can be quite loud at certain times of the day. While the school does not have a dedicated room for its library, a small library space has been set up within the teacher’s office. Students used this space infrequently during the researcher’s time at the school.

Pleasant View is located on a hill in a residential area away from the market center of Area 25. As a result of the location, there is very little outside noise. There is no surrounding wall, and no foot traffic disturbing the school. A disadvantage of this remote location is that the

³³ These structures have walls and a floor although they are missing the rough, door and windows.

³⁴This school is a national school which is the highest level of secondary school in the country. The order of secondary schools in the public system according to quality is – national schools, district schools, conventional school, and CDSS, although the former two make up a very small segment of secondary schools.

school does not have its own source of drinking water, which is a frequent complaint of the students. The school is also without a library and has only a very small office space for the teachers. The offices were under construction at the time of research.

Mkango CDSS is located along a main road in Area 25, close to one of the market places. Although the school is without a library, there is a public library within walking distance that many of the students use as a place to study. However, the library is not financially accessible to all students because of a small annual fee is charged for its use. As the school is located near the markets and is not surrounded by a fence, there is a lot of foot traffic through the school grounds and people often loiter, thus disturbing the students.

5.2.2 Enrolment

At the time of research, Chule had the lowest enrolment. Approximately 40 students, registered at the school. Of the 12 students observed to be in form 4 there were 6 boys and 6 girls. While this school had been operating for 17 years, it was forced to close when a storm blew the roofs off some of the buildings in 2009. Prior to the closure, the school had upwards of 200 students; however, when the school reopened a year later only a few returned (Chule Head). While enrolment has been growing, in comparison to other schools in the study, it is quite low.

The second private school, Njati, was also closed for some time and only reopening in 2012. The school operated between 2002 and 2007 under the direction of the current owner's late father. The passing of the former owner forced the school to close until the current owner had returned to Malawi upon finishing his studies in the United Kingdom. The school has been operating successfully since 2012 and has grown significantly in that time. At the time of research, the school had 104 students, after a number of semesters of steady growth (Njati Head).

The final private school, Pleasant View Academy, is the largest of the three private schools in terms of enrollment, with approximately 400 students, an average of 100 per class.³⁵ The researcher did not solicit the exact number of students, and their breakdown by gender. However, based on the observations made during classes, it was estimated that, in Physical Science form 4 there were 72³⁶ students, 39 boys and 33 girls, and in Agriculture form 3 there were 69 students, 35 boys and 34 girls. The school has run without interruption since it opened in 2002, when it had only 20 students (Pleasant View Head).

Finally, the public school, Mkango, is the largest school with a total of 431 students enrolled, more than 100 in each classroom. In form four, there are 103 students, 58 boys and 45 girls. The Ministry of Education assigns students to the school, and neither school administration nor students have much control over these decisions. For a student to change schools they must apply for a transfer through the Ministry of Education (Mkango Deputy).

5.2.3 Management

Each of the schools have a slightly different management structure. As a CDSS, Mkango, is managed by the Head and the deputy, although funding, enrolment, and staffing are all decided by the Ministry of Education (Mkango Deputy).

Pleasant View is ran by the sole owner, although she is only at the school approximately once a week. Most days the school is overseen by the Head (Pleasant View Head). Njati is ran by the Head who is also a part owner of the school (Njati Head). The other owner is not involved in

³⁵Generally there is more in the examination years, forms 2 and 4, and fewer in forms 1 and 3.

³⁶ It may be observed that there are substantially fewer students attending this class than there is in form 4 in total, this is because not all students take each class, on top of this there may also be some students absent.

daily operations. Chule is ran by the Head and deputy, while the owner does not live in Lilongwe and is only consulted over the phone concerning larger decisions (Chule Head).

5.2.4 Students

Student interviews made up a significant portion of the data gathered. 21 students were interviewed, either individually or part of a group, depending on their personal preference. Of the students who volunteered, interviewees were chosen in such a way that approximate gender parity was achieved, but otherwise students were selected at random.

The purpose of these interviews was to understand LFP and CDSS education from the perspective of the student. To this end, a number of themes were discussed, including school selection, school and teacher quality, and discipline. Interviewees were given opportunities to move away from these themes and discuss any aspects of their education that they deemed important.

Table 1: Personal Information of the students interviewed:

Student	School	Sex	Age	Time at School	Guardian	Guardian's Employment
1	Pleasant View	F	17	2 nd year	Mother and Father	Business Women and Factory Worker
2	Pleasant View	M	18	1 st year	Uncle	World Vision
3	Pleasant View	F		4 th year	Father	----
4	Njati	M	26	4 th year	Mother and Older Brother	Unemployed**
5	Njati	F	16	1 st year	Mother and Father	Farther is part owner of the school
6	Njati*	F	21	1 st year	Mother and Father	Teacher and consultant
7		M	25	3 rd year	Aunt and uncle	Teacher/ business man
8		F	17	3 rd year	Mother and Father	Employed
9		M		3 rd year	Aunt and Uncle	Business/ employed
10		F		3 rd year	Mother and Father	Farmers

11		M	20	3 rd year	Mother and Father	Butcher/unemployed
12	Chule*	M	27	1 st year	On own	Working at Hostel
13		M		1 st year	Uncle and Aunt	----
14		M		1 st year	Mother and Father	----
15		F		2 nd year	Mother and Father	----
16	Mkango*	M	20	4 th year	Mother	Business sells SH cloths
17		F	18	4 th year	Mother and Father	World Vision
18		M	18	3 rd year	Mother and Father	----
19		F		4 th year	Older Brother	----
20	Mkango	M	19	4 th year	Older Sisters	Renting out late parents' house
21	Mkango	F	20	4 th year	Grandmother	Grandmother makes gravel **

* Students put in the same section represent group interviews.

** Tuition for this student is paid for by the school

---- Information was not provided by the respondent

Students attending the participating schools, both public and private, have diverse backgrounds and are supported by guardians of various socio-economic means. Of all the private school students interviewed, only one student is paying their own tuition, and two students are receiving funding from the school. The student paying his own tuition is doing so by working at a tourist hostel in the city center. It is uncommon for a student to have a paid job³⁷ and none of the other students interviewed paid their own school fees. Of the students not paying fees one is the recipient of a bursary. This student comes from an impoverished family and is living with his brother. He was selected by the pastor of his church to receive the bursary, although the school is responsible for the funding. The other student not paying fees is the child of the school owner. Although the objectivity of this student may be questioned, during the interview she was extremely critical of the school. This is likely due to her having previously attended a national public school, which is a government school of the highest quality. For all of the remaining students, a parent or another family relative, acting as their guardian, paid their tuition.

³⁷ Although it was not discussed it is possible that while they were not at school student would work for their parents, at their family farm or business; however, these would not be paid positions.

Of the parents and guardians paying fees, some were petty business owners, owning small shops or stands where they sell food and household goods. Many of the guardians worked in factories located in Area 25. In only one case, the parents of a student work as farmers. Although farmers make up a large portion of the Malawian population, they are generally poorer than the working class and are rarely able to afford school fees. Although the study took place in peri-urban areas where farmers make up less of the population than they do on average throughout Malawi, they were still under represented among the parent of students who were interviewed.

Students at the public school came from similar backgrounds. Of the students interviewed, two were orphans. The first student had their tuition paid by a bursary and the second student paid his fees with money raised by family renting out the house of their late father. Although these students generally came from families of similar socio-economic means as those students in the private schools, it is likely some students come from poorer families because the lower fees charged by the school make it more accessible to these students.

5.3 School Selection

The topic of school selection acts as a nexus, where the expectations and desires of the students and guardians interact directly with the characteristics of the schools. Discussions of school selection reveals which characteristics of the school students find most important. The theme leads to questions of how a student's school has compared to their expectations, which aspects of the school are the students satisfied with and which do they consider in need of improvement. Furthermore, a discussion of how each student goes about selecting their school will help explain why such great differences exist between LFP schools.

Discussions concerning school selection revealed many of the themes used in the interviews. School characteristics including location, reputation, tuition rates, and discipline were all considered relevant by student participants when they were selecting their school. Therefore, these schools characteristics are among those considered most important to students. For that reason, the topic of school selection acts as a good introduction to several themes that will be explored throughout the body of this chapter.

Within the public system, students are selected for admission to secondary schools according to the marks they receive on the national primary school exit examination and the geographic area in which they live. Students with the highest marks go to the best schools; students with lower marks attend a CDSS, such as Mkango, while the majority of students leaving primary school are not provided a place in the public system. For the students placed in a CDSS, it is only possible to transfer within the public system to another CDSS by putting a request into the Ministry of Education.

Of the six public school students interviewed, half of them were placed in Mkango while the other half were selected to go to other schools. Of the three selected to other schools, two of these were selected to other CDSSs while the third was initially selected to a Conventional school. One changed because the initial school was too far from their home, while the student selected to a Conventional school, changed schools because the first was on strike. Only one of the six students changed schools based on preference. When asked if he had considered another school one student responded: “no, no, because you know other schools are expensive, but this school has small fees that we can afford to pay, that's why I don't want to go to another school” (Mkango Student 20)

Private school selection is a significantly more involved process since students have much more agency in deciding which school they will attend. The majority of the private school students interviewed decided for themselves, which school to attend, although their parent or guardian typically paid the tuition.

Only one student had the school chosen for them by their parent (Pleasant View Student 1). In this case, the school was selected based the performance of the student's older brother who had attended the school a few years prior. There were also two other students who did not select the school for themselves because they attended for free, and therefore did not have the same freedom to choose between schools as did the other students. These students were not paying school fees because, the first was selected to receive a bursary from the school (Njati Student 4), and the second is the daughter of one of the school owners³⁸ (Njati Student 5).

All of the other students interviewed selected the school themselves, but not necessarily with complete autonomy. One student was told by their parents that the school must be one of the cheapest, between 12000 and 15000 Mk (Njati Student 8). Furthermore, it is likely that even when the guardian did not verbally communicate this, such conditions were implicitly understood, since most of these students chose an LFP school on their own despite there being other more expensive (and most likely higher quality) schools for them to consider.

The parent or guardians' level of involvement in school selection varied. While it was usually up to the student to search out the school, parents would often query their child about the school. A 20-year-old male student from Njati stated, "my parents they asked me 'is it going to help you on the outside'. Yes, sure it is going to help me... It is right for me, so they find that they can support me" (Njati Student 11). In other cases, the parents would visit the school before

³⁸ Although it seems likely that this student would be biased towards the school, they were in fact very critical of it having just come from a national school.

the child became a student there. As one Njati student stated “Myself, I chose the school myself, then they visited” (Njati Student 6).

School selection highlights an important difference between the public and private school systems. The ability to choose a school is often championed by proponents of LFPs as their greatest advantage over the public system (Tooley & Dixon, 2006; Tooley, 2009). In the public sector, most students interviewed attend the school selected³⁹ for them by the Ministry. With the infrequency of transfers between secondary schools, and a limited ability to select their school, students and by extension, their parents and guardians find it difficult to exert pressure on these schools to improve.

Conversely, in the private sector, students were able to select schools for themselves. Although their options were often limited to only a few schools based on financial and geographical restrictions, students still worked to select the best school for themselves within these constraints. As a result, private schools are encouraged to improve constantly in order to compete for business, while the best among them is rewarded with a lion’s share of enrolment and revenue. However, this most likely does not apply to rural areas where there would be too few LFP schools to provide much choice.

Students listed a great number of factors that they considered in making their selection including location, school fees, learning environment, school reputation, discipline, teacher quality, and teacher turnover. These factors not only create a comprehensive picture of what students’ desire of their school, they are also important to other stakeholders. For this reason, these factors are the basis for many of the themes discussed below.

³⁹ This includes the student who was transferred because his first school was striking.

5.3.1 Location and Surrounding Area

Although school location has been touched on above, it is important now to consider it in greater detail. Students frequently mentioned school location and the surroundings as either a benefit or detriment to their school. In the case of Pleasant View, which is located away from any markets or busy areas, many students noted the location of the school as a benefit. For at least one student this was a large part of why he chose to attend the school. Students attending Chule also had a similar response, as it is located in a residential part of Likuni, and has a surrounding wall that eliminates foot traffic passing through the school grounds.

Njati was located in a slightly busier, peri-urban area, away from the larger markets. Due to foot traffic passing through school grounds and a noisy maize mill directly beside the school that forced teachers to raise their voices in order to be heard, students voiced their desire for the school to erect a surrounding wall.

Finally, Mkango, the CDSS, was located directly beside one of the larger markets in Area 25; because it did not have a surrounding wall, its location caused a number of problems. Many of the students complained that people walked through the school grounds and disturbed classes. Furthermore, students described incidents where drunk men from the market came through the school and accosted them. One student said that men from the market “come to play their football there. Before they play their football there, they sit in the corridor and smoke their chamba (marijuana). Others they come in breaking the windows” (Mkango Student 18). “When you tell them that you are disturbing us, then they say they will beat you” (Mkango Student 16).

Although school location can only be judged on a school-by-school basis and cannot be considered representative of the system, it is worth noting that of the four participating schools, the three private schools were in locations much more conducive to learning. Mkango was

located in an area that detracted from students' ability to study, with distractions and even the possibility of assault.

5.3.2 Physical Structures – Libraries and Laboratories

The desire for a library and laboratory at their school was a topic that arose frequently, because according to students, none of the participating schools were sufficiently equipped in this regard. Although Njati had a library, it was located in the corner of the teachers' offices. According to the students, this makes studying in the library difficult "because when you are reading the teachers are talking" (Njati Student 8). It is for this reason that the researcher only infrequently observed students using the library. None of the other participating schools had a library at the time of research.

The importance of a library to a students' education is two-fold. First, textbooks are expensive and relatively rare in Malawian LFP secondary schools. For this reason very few students, and none observed during the study, have textbooks of their own. Furthermore, the school rarely has enough for each student, so they are handed out at the beginning of the class and students are made to share. Only if a school has a library do students have access to these books outside of class hours, which is extremely important to a students' ability to learn the curriculum. Secondly, it is often difficult for many students to do school work at home, which is why some students would prefer to attend boarding school (Mkango Student 16). The absence of a library means they have nowhere to study outside of the classroom, which I observed to be noisy and disruptive outside of school hours, and unavailable during a student's free periods.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Since students do not take all of the classes offered at a grade level, they will often have a free period even though there is a class being taught in their classroom.

While some CDSSs and LFP secondary schools have libraries, fewer have a laboratory due to the high cost associated with lab equipment. The absence of such school components are a significant hindrance to students attending these schools. MSCE science exams have both a written and a practical component. Without a laboratory, students are unprepared for the practical portion of the standardized national science exams. To prepare students for these exams the teacher can only describe the process of conducting an experiment. This puts students at a considerable disadvantage compared to those students who are lucky enough to attend a school with a laboratory, and who they are competing against for a limited number of university positions.

The data indicates that the lack of both libraries and laboratories is a significant detriment to the quality of education provided by both LFP schools and the CDSS. It appears realistic that both LFP and CDSS provide a library in which students can study. In this case, increased government regulation coupled with government subsidy may be beneficial. As mentioned in previous chapters, critiques of the Malawian LFP secondary school system propose government assistance in the purchase of learning materials, especially textbooks (Lewin & Sayed, 2005; Chimombo, 2009b). Those schools, both public and private, that have a shortage of textbooks should certainly be assisted in this regard. The government could also take the opportunity to attach regulations as a precondition to assistance, assuring that all schools have separate room for a library before they provide textbooks.

Laboratories pose a more difficult problem. Except for the rare case where a school has access to equipment from another school, as with Chule, it is very difficult for LFP schools or CDSSs to have access to such equipment because of the expense. This puts the students attending these schools at a very significant disadvantage when competing with students at

higher tiers of the public system or more expensive private schools. This disadvantage is intrinsic to the school system and there does not appear to be a readily available solution short of deep changes to the curriculum and examination process.

5.3.3 School Fees and Bursaries

All of the schools participating in the research, including the CDSS, charge school fees on a per term basis.⁴¹ Mkango CDSS charges 3,500 Mk per term. Of the private schools, Pleasant View has the highest tuition at 13,000 Mk, Njati is second charging 11,500 MK and finally Chule charges only 7,500 Mk.

Private school fees do not seem to be set according to the school's operation costs, but rather on the consumers' willingness to pay. At Pleasant View, fees are set by considering "what it was before and how much we can raise it from the baseline being last year's fees" (Pleasant View Owner). At other school, such as Njati, the owner bases school fees on what other neighboring schools are charging.

At newer schools, like Njati and Chule, fees were set lower in order to attract students. As a school begins to grow and develop a positive reputation, tuition rates are often raised. The owner of Njati explained, "If people trust you because you are offering a good education, then even if you put your tuition up they will send their kids because they will know the type of education you are offering".

In addition to considering the consumers' willingness to pay, school owners also took into account the economic situation of potential students. The owner of Pleasant View took into consideration the parents who were paying fees, where "most of them are ... drivers,

⁴¹ There are three terms in a school year.

messengers. They are the low type of people who are working in the tobacco fields”, and for this reason it would be impossible to raise tuition too high. The owner of Njati understood the financial situation of students attending the school.

[B]asically this school that I am running here, as you have noticed, I am serving the poor urban community...Because of that I thought that if my fees go up maybe I am going to cut somebody's chance of getting an education (Njati Owner).

The owner of Njati displays not only an understanding of operating a school as a business, but also a sense of responsibility to the community including its less wealthy members. The school has a scholarship program where certain number of underprivileged, often orphaned, children, attend without charge. Similarly, at both Pleasant View and Chule there are a small number of less privileged students who are not required to pay school fees, although the number of non-fee paying students that attend each school is unknown.

In addition to some of the schools providing bursaries, the administration in all three of the LFP schools displayed an appreciation for the difficulties that some of the guardians experience with paying school fees.

“[F]or example [if] someone cannot afford to pay 13000 at once, that particular guardian should come and say I cannot afford to pay such an amount of money, then we negotiate and we continue” (Pleasant View Head).

Similarly, the Head at Chule expressed the flexibility of school fees based on an individual’s ability to pay. If a student is unable to pay the full amount, “I tell them to pay 2000, provided there is a good arrangement between the parents and the owner”. While we must assume that students were turned away, or forced to leave the school for not paying fees, this was not mentioned by any of the administrators. Instead, it seems that they tried to keep students in school even if this meant having to lower tuition on a case-by-case basis.

Only one of the students interviewed was there on a scholarship. This student had previously attended another school but dropped out when his guardian could no longer afford to pay the fees. He was then selected by the pastor of his church to attend Njati on a scholarship that was paid for by the school. The director of the school had allotted a number of free spaces at the school and asked the pastor of a nearby church to select student who were in need.

Although the scholarships appear to be in place for genuinely altruistic reasons, allowing a student to attend for free or at a reduced rate, may also be beneficial to the school. According to the Chule Head “those who are the orphans do much better [in school] than those who are paying the full amount”. Although the Head did not know exactly why this was, he hypothesised that because these students have no one to support them, they know that this is their only opportunity and for that reason, they work especially hard. Whatever the cause, these students often received the best marks in the school (Chule Head; Jamo Head). Since the quality of a school is usually recognised by the results of its top performers,⁴² allowing these students to attend the school without paying fees may in turn attract new paying students.

Similarly, at Pleasant View, one of the students who attended the school on a scholarship was awarded a spot at one of the government colleges upon her graduation from secondary school, showing she had graduated with very high marks (Pleasant View Head). However, this was not true of all students receiving bursaries. The school owner also spoke of another student there on a scholarship that was not very motivated, and did poorly in school. Although this student would certainly not improve the reputation of the school, there was certainly no talk about taking away his scholarship. The school owner only expressed her hope that he would

⁴² This idea is discussed in greater detail below.

pass. From this, it is fair to surmise that bursaries are generally provided for altruistic reasons, and not to boost the reputation of the school.

Although, as is mentioned above, LFP schools are financially unavailable to most Malawians, the fact that they frequently offer bursaries allowing some students, who were excluded from the public system, and who could not afford even low cost schooling a chance to further their education. It is also important to consider that there are many Malawians who are unable to afford tuition in even public sector, and in this instance, a bursary to a private school may be their only opportunity for secondary education. Some scholars (Tooley & Dixon, 2006) believe that extending access to private schools through government issued bursaries could be a more efficient way expand education provision in developing countries. Since many schools already have programs of their own in place, government programs might be easier to establish by utilizing LFP schools' pre-existing methods of identifying students in need.

5.3.4 School Reputation

Within the LFP literature, school quality is generally assessed according to pass rates of students. In the Malawian literature this is especially true (Chimombo, 2009b; Lewin & Sayed, 2005; Rose, 2005) since nationwide standardized exams generate an easy basis for comparison. However, for students assessing the quality of a school, pass rates are rarely considered. Instead, the measure used most often in assessing a school is the mark of the top student on the MSCE⁴³ final exams from the previous year. Use of this measure stems from the student's desire to continue to a public university, a goal that is only achieved by those students with the highest grades.

⁴³ MSCE is the secondary school exit exam

For the JC⁴⁴ standardized exam, an exceptionally good mark and a mark that just passes have the same result, the student moves on to form 3. For this reason, a consumer may choose to look at the pass rate for this exam (Nkata Bay Head). However, for the MSCE exam merely graduating is rarely the goal of the student.

Within Malawi, most students are not content having only a high school education since “nowadays in Malawi [to] have a MSCE... it is nothing”... “You cannot find a job” (Chule Student Group). Because a secondary school certificate does little to guarantee employment, most students desire to go on to university; however, spots at the public universities are exceedingly scarce. Since university placements are decided on merit, it is only those students with the highest grades who gain entrance. For this reason, students gauge a school by the highest mark or marks, coming out of the MSCE. They feel this is the best indicator of the schools’ ability to send students to university.

According to the data, it appears logical to judge schools by their top achievers; however, this could have negative implications. It is possible that a school attempting to bolster their top students will concentrate more resources on them. Because a school is judged only on its top marks, teachers could safely ignore those students who are not at the top of the class. However, this was not observed by the researcher, further observation time would be needed to establish if this was happening.

5.3.5 Discipline

The topic of discipline came up often during interviews with both teachers and students. Discipline refers to the maintenance of order conducive to an educational environment by the

⁴⁴ JC is the exam to pass from form 2 to form 3

schools' teachers and administration through monitoring and punishing students. Students would generally be punished for offences such as disrupting class or skipping school, and would be made to sweep classrooms or clean the blackboards, although repeated infractions could also result in suspension or expulsion.

This topic was not discussed at all of the schools. At Chule, because of the small class size, I conducted only one group interview with students and since this was the first student interview, the theme of discipline had not yet been identified. However, all of the students with whom I discussed this theme, considered discipline to be an important determinant of school quality. They all spoke of discipline in a positive sense and considered it a necessary component of a good education. Although students' degree of satisfaction with discipline proved variable between schools, students at each school claimed that a higher degree of discipline would be an improvement. However, student interviewees also pointed out that some students, specifically those less concerned about their academic performance, preferred a situation where discipline was lacking.

At Mkango, the process of disciplining a student took a regimented form. According to the Deputy, for an infraction such as talking during class or coming late to school, the student is counselled upon their first offence, and then punished if the offence is repeated. Punishments may include mopping or sweeping the class or slashing⁴⁵ in the schoolyard. If the problem persists, the boy or girl will be suspended for two weeks in hopes that during this time the guardians will advise and encourage the student to do better. Upon the student's return, he or she is counseled by the staff and given a final punishment before being allowed to return to class.

⁴⁵ When students are made to cut grass or brush around the school with a machete.

The student is then monitored to observe if they have improved their behavior, and if they have not done so they will then be expelled (Mkango Head).

While the disciplinary actions are well outlined, they seem to be applied only infrequently. A student explained that while discipline is good at other schools, it is quite poor at his school. When teachers see students doing something wrong “they don’t say anything, they just pass by” (Mkango Student 16). Although students said that discipline has been much improved since the instatement of the new Head, none of the students interviewed are yet satisfied with the level of discipline currently being enforced.

Teachers and administration may not be entirely to blame for the unsatisfactory level of discipline, since, as the school deputy pointed out, “in a classroom situation where you have 103 students against one teacher [discipline] is difficult”. Surely, this contributes significantly to the difficulties in maintaining order. Nevertheless, Pleasant View, an LFP with a similar number of students, seems more capable of maintaining a high level of discipline. Even at Mkango, some teachers do very well creating order within a classroom overflowing with students. In one class observed by the researcher, the teacher successfully maintained a high degree of discipline and appeared to be well respected by the students; although, this seems to be the exception rather than the rule. As one student explained, “there are a few teachers, when we see them we just keep quiet... but not all the teachers. That is the problem” (Mkango Student 20). Although having a large number of students can create difficulties, the fact that some teachers enforce the rules and maintain order in these classrooms shows that it is possible even in a class of 100 plus students. The poor performance of some teachers in this regard may result from a lack of incentive placed upon public school teachers to carry out these tasks.

Discipline was discussed with the students at both Pleasant View and Njati. At both schools, the students said that the level of discipline at their school was good. When asked what made Njati a good school a student responded, “Discipline, they are also disciplining at this school. It is important that each and every student has discipline” (Njati Student 4). Similarly, another student responded that, “at Pleasant View they are very strict according to the student, and here everyone, he or she is under law, and he must obey the rules and regulations” (Pleasant View Student 3).

Discipline took various forms depending on the school. One student described the discipline process at Pleasant View.

They call you, then you go, they warn you. Don't do this, this, this, and that, in case you don't know. Next time you do you are going into the black book, if you are in the black book more than two times, three times, then you are going to be expelled. They don't hesitate, they don't have any chance if you do that thing twice they expel you out. (Pleasant View Student 2)

In other instances, punishments came in the form of sweeping out classrooms, slashing in the field, or suspension. According to one student, parents are also happy with this system and have come to the staff room in order to commend teachers to this effect (Pleasant View Student 2). Although the students were satisfied with the level of discipline that they found at their school, they also acknowledge that it was not perfect and could still be improved upon. “I can say that it is disciplined but not completely” (Pleasant View Student 1). Although students of Pleasant View and Njati consider their school to be well disciplined, both students and teachers mentioned other private schools where there was very little discipline.

Since private schools cater to the desires of the consumer, it seems counterintuitive that a private school should have poor discipline considering all of the students interviewed regarded discipline positively. However, it is important to remember that the students interviewed were

not randomly selected but rather volunteered to participate, and may show a greater interest in their education than others. These students are also older and more mature than when they left primary school and first chose which school to attend. Although they prefer a school with strong discipline, they did not claim that this trait was universal to all students. Some of the students mentioned another school in their area that was popular with many students precisely because it did very little in the way of enforcing rules (Chule Student Group). In this way, some schools may attract students by having poor discipline.

As one teacher explained:

[S]ome students feel free going to such schools because they know there are no penalties on them if they are breaking the rules. But finally this affects their results at the end of the academic year, but [the school] make[s] a lot of profits. Now the schools like this one where the rules are strictly followed, what happens is more students fear to come here... they think it will not be good for them. So at the end you find we have more students because of the quality, but not as many students as compared to the schools where the rules are not strictly followed. (Pleasant View Teacher 1)

At the time when Njati reopened, students say that the discipline was quite poor. When asked the reason for this, one student employed a similar logic:

[I]t's like if you have a business you have to get people to come and buy from you. So they want children to not change schools. So when I was in form 3 there were maybe 10 or 15 students in the class. So they were carrying us like an egg, treating us very carefully so we would not run away. (Njati Student 7)

One Head told a story of a student who confessed to having lied to his parents in order to attend a less strict school, which resulted in him failing form 3 (Nkata Bay Head). After, he relented and returned to the more disciplined school where he succeeded in passing his MSCE.

In this case, a lack of discipline at some schools may not just be the result of laziness on behalf of the teachers, but rather of a conscious decision made by the school administration. As a result of students choosing their own school, institutions cater to their desires, even though they

may be detrimental to the quality of education provided. According one private school Head, this is the outcome of a school being run in a business-oriented fashion (Nkata Bay Head).

Although it is unknown what quality of discipline exists in other secondary schools, among the schools observed discipline appears to be maintained to a higher level within the private schools. A possible reason for this is the competition that exists between schools in the private sector. Competition could cause these schools to provide strong discipline in order improve school quality and attract more students. In the public sector, students are assigned to schools, so this source of competition does not exist and there may be less incentive to provide strong discipline.

At both public and private schools, discipline appears to be largely influenced by the higher-level administration. At Mkango, although discipline is still unsatisfactory, students claim it has been significantly improved in the last year, and attribute this improvement to the arrival of a new Head (Mkango Student Group). Similarly, at private schools, the decision to provide strong discipline appears to come from the school owners and Heads.

Encouraging a greater level of involvement by parents and guardians could significantly improve discipline, especially at those schools where it is worst. Although students may actively search out private schools with low discipline, or be complacent with the low level of discipline offered by a public school, it seems unlikely that parents would encourage these actions. Parents would likely vie for the best education possible for their children by seeking out more disciplined schools, or encouraging a more disciplined culture in the school their child attends.

The themes discussed above, provide important insight into CDSS and LFP schools; however, they do not necessarily provide a complete picture. The themes that follow, though not directly related to school selection, still play a vital role in contributing to our understanding of

Low Fee Private education. These topics came up frequently with respondents, and therefore appeared to be of great importance to stakeholders.

5.4 Parent Involvement

Parents did not directly participate in the research process. Instead, data was gathered from other stakeholders concerning parental involvement with the school. While, it was generally accepted that parental involvement is beneficial, the extent of their involvement with the school varies greatly from student to student and school to school.

The degree to which the schools engage parents varies between the schools participating in the study. According to one of the students, teachers at Pleasant View meet with parents 3 or 4 times a semester (Pleasant View Student 2). While at Njati, there is no Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the school only communicates with a guardian when a problem arises with the student's performance or the payment of fees (Njati Student 7). Mkango, the CDSS, has no formal PTA and although it is not entirely clear the extent to which parents are involved with the school, the students made it apparent that greater involvement would be an improvement. According to one student, the "school can be improved maybe if the head teacher had some talks with parents and told them the problems of this school" (Mkango Group).

Although it is apparent that significant variance exists between schools, the research indicates that many schools in both the private and public sectors do not do enough to involve parents. This lack of parental involvement may be at the root of many of these schools shortcomings. Most parents, especially those who are paying a large portion of their income towards school fees, want the best education possible for their children. Since guardians are

generally responsible for the payment school fees, they also have influence over the school as a consumer. At some schools, quality is diminished because it is easier for the schools administration to relax some aspects of the education, such as discipline. In other cases, discipline is relaxed on purpose in order to attract students. Increased parental involvement would have a positive influence on the school by discouraging school quality from being diminished in these ways. For this reason, the increased involvement of parents with a school through the instatement of a PTA⁴⁶ appears to be an inexpensive means to improve education.

A school owner in Nkata Bay discussed how parents are encouraged to engage and take ‘ownership of the school’, by putting aside part of the tuition fees collected, Mk 500 per student, into a separate fund for the PTA. In this way, parents are able to decide how the money is spent to improve the school, such as buying new desks or library materials. The PTA is also included in aspects of decision-making. When the school needed to increase school fees due to inflation, the Head worked with the board of directors and the parents to reach a decision. According to the Head, as a result, parents did not resist the increase in fees; instead, they understood and agreed with the decision. In these ways, the Nkata Bay LFP encourages a high level of involvement by parents and guardians.

Although the school in Nkata Bay provides a basic model, which could be followed by other LFP schools, the research suggests that many schools do not do this. Those LFP schools that attract students based on their lack of discipline would not want to follow such an example because greater involvement of parents would most likely decrease enrolment when parents observe the education being offered. In this case, Ministry of Education regulations could be

⁴⁶ It is important to note that parents were to interviewed during this research, therefore it is unknown whether they would want their involvement with the school increased, or if a stronger PTA would be met with resistance on the their part. For this reason, further research into this topic would be beneficial.

implemented, requiring schools to increase parent and guardian involvement. Implementing compliance and follow-up programs to ensure these regulations are followed may be more difficult than checking other regulations such as the size of an exam hall or the presence of a library. However, the direct involvement of students' parents and guardians at all schools would represent a significant improvement, and would come at a low financial expense to the families and schools.

5.5 Teacher Quality

Field research also involved interviews with five teachers, from three different schools. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into the perspective of these teachers, and identify contrasts and similarities between their views and the perspectives of other stakeholders. Many of the themes discussed with other stakeholders, such as discipline and school quality were also discussed in these interviews, however, other themes more specific to teachers were also broached, including salary, job security, and job satisfaction.

Table 2: Breakdown of Teachers Interviewed:

Teacher #	School	Years Teaching	Time at this School	Education	Subject Teaching
1	Pleasant View	8	3 years	Diploma from seminary College	Biology and Chichewa
2	Pleasant View	1 month	1 month	Diploma in Education	Physical Science
3	Njati	----	6 months	Degree in Statistics	Physical Science and Biology
4	Mkango	4 Years	4 Years	Degree in Education	Math and Physical Science
5	Mkango	27 Years	8 Years	Diploma in Education, Diploma in Guidance Counselling	Life Skills. Geography, and Bible Knowledge

---- Information was not provided by the respondent

Teacher quality is a theme of significant importance touched upon by all stakeholders interviewed. While this theme had many facets, it may be understood by the interplay of three variables – qualifications, experience and motivation. Although the importance of each variable differs from teacher to teacher, each of them have a significant influence.

5.5.1 Qualifications and Experience

Students frequently spoke of teachers being qualified or unqualified; however, this phraseology often acted as a sort of catch all for the teachers' overall quality. This was most evident at private schools when students would claim that their school provided a good education because it had qualified teachers, when in reality this was not the case.

The specific definition of a qualified teacher varied depending on the individual being interviewed. It often referred to a teacher who has a degree⁴⁷ or diploma⁴⁸ specifically in education (henceforth referred to as qualified). While at other times, it would refer to a teacher having a degree or diploma in any field (henceforth referred to as semi-qualified). Unqualified teachers were those who had only their MSCE. At private schools, among the teachers polled, very few were qualified, while most were semi-qualified and a few were unqualified, although the unqualified teachers usually had a significant amount of experience.

Due to the ambiguity in how 'qualified' was defined, along with the small proportion of teachers interviewed, it is unclear the exact number of teachers who were qualified, semi-qualified and unqualified at each school; however, it is clear that a significant variation exists between CDSS and LFP schools. All of the teachers, Heads and school owners who were asked about the

⁴⁷ A four year university accreditation.

⁴⁸ A two year university accreditation.

teachers qualifications at public vs private schools, said that there were a greater number of qualified teachers in the CDSSs. Although, it was not determined what all of the teachers' qualifications were at the other schools, at Pleasant View, of the seven teachers, two are qualified, four are semi-qualified, and one is unqualified (Pleasant View Head). In contrast, the three teachers employed by CDSS that were interviewed and/or observed for this study were all fully qualified.

The scarcity of qualified teachers in private schools is due to the combination of lower pay offered by most LFP schools as compared to public schools and the shortage of qualified teachers throughout the country. According to the Minister of Secondary Education:

[I]n terms of staffing of their [private] schools, we are the only trainers of teachers and we train just for the public schools and not for the private schools because we don't train in excess... But in government, we still have big gaps in terms of student-teacher ratios. It's like there is no surplus to go into private schools, so they are affected on that front, human capacity. (Chikondano Mussa, Minister of Secondary Education)

5.5.2 Motivation

Teacher motivation is an interesting phenomenon highlighting some fundamental differences between the private and public sectors. Motivation comes in various forms in the different institutions, based on the observations and interviews conducted by the researcher, it appears to stem from four areas – salary, monitoring, job (in)security, and passion for education.

Within the private sector, monitoring and job security go hand in hand. It is in the owner's best interest to monitor the actions of teachers to ensure they are doing their job satisfactorily. The owner has the ability to fire any teacher they feel is doing a poor job, and it is this threat of dismissal that acts as a strong motivator for teachers to perform. Although the firing of teachers appears to occur only infrequently and the researcher never came across an instance

of this, it seems that the prospect of dismissal is enough to motivate teachers to meet the schools' standards. These two factors work in tandem to create a strong motivator for teachers at private schools. Removing one of these factors, as is the case in the public system, could significantly diminish the ability of the school administration to motivate teachers.

Within the public system, for a teacher the threat of dismissal is very low. If a teacher is doing a poor job, or is frequently absent, the only recourse for the Head is to lodge a complaint with the Ministry of Education, and even then "ministry officials ... don't even come and find out what has happened, they will just think of ... transferring the teacher" (Mkango Teacher 5). When asked if teachers are ever fired for misbehaving one teacher responded "no, no, unless certain cases... maybe, if he is found drunk during working hours" (Mkango Teacher 5). Except for the most serious infractions, the most severe punishment that can be brought upon a teacher in the public system is requesting that the Ministry transfer them to another school. This does not create the same incentive to perform as the threat of dismissal that is present in the private sector.

Although in the public sector the Head does not have the authority to dismiss teachers, this is not to say that they have no influence over how teachers perform. While monitoring and reprimands are the only tools available to the Heads, their influence is still significant. Evidence of this can be observed in the changes that have occurred at Mkango CDSS since the instatement of the new Head. While the students were still generally unsatisfied with the quality of education, they were quick to point out that it had improved significantly in the past year. A student from Mkango said "this Headmaster is improving [the school], now teachers are coming here, the students now are learning to have good discipline" (Mkango Student 18), while another student pointed out that "the Head, instead of just staying in the office, is helping the other teachers to teach. So that is better" (Mkango Student 17).

Passion for education is the least quantifiable determinant of teaching quality; however, it may be the most significant. While other factors contribute significantly to making a proficient educator, this intangible quality determines in large part, how and to what extent they foster and apply their skills as an educator. It had an especially profound effect when present in a Head or school owner as this seemed to influence other staff members. In some cases passion for education also allowed teachers to excel at their work despite deficiencies in experience and qualifications.

One teacher and school founder interviewed in Nkata Bay, Malawi, told the story of the humble beginnings of his school. At the age of 19 after finishing his MSCE, he and two friends, none of whom were able to attend university because of the scarcity of spaces within the public sector, decided to open a private secondary school. They looked upon it as an opportunity to find employment for themselves but also to create an opportunity for children in their community to continue their education where public school opportunities were limited. With minimal experience, and only having just graduated secondary school themselves they started teaching 14 students, seven in form one and seven in form two. In their first year, all seven students in form two passed their JC exams (Nkata Bay Head). With no teaching experience or qualifications, their passion to contribute to their community through education provided the motivation needed to make the school successful. Another example of this is found at Chule where a number of teachers work at the school part time that also teach at the nearby public national school (Chule Head). The Head said that these teachers are only paid 'peanuts' and still they come and teach. Since these teachers are clearly not motivated by money, or the threat of dismissal, it can only be their passion for education that leads them to lend their expertise to this low cost private school.

5.5.3 Teacher Quality: Private-Public Comparison

Teacher quality varied greatly, although without more extensive observation it is not possible to say that the teachers at one school were superior to those at another. What is clear is that teachers are better trained⁴⁹ and better paid at the public schools⁵⁰ compared to the private schools observed. However, the high level of job security in the public sector may act to demotivate teachers, since, even with poor performance they are unlikely to be fired (Mkango Head). In the private sector where a school owner has the power to fire a teacher they think is not doing an acceptable job, teachers may be more motivated and attentive to their work in order to maintain their employment.

In this way, both private and public schools may have advantages in terms of teacher quality, which may be learned from and emulated by the other. In order to improve teacher quality, private schools could seek out more qualified teachers, although this is difficult considering the shortage of qualified secondary teachers in Malawi. Ideally, the government could increase the output of qualified teachers coming from public universities; however, this would represent a considerable expense. An alternative would be for the government to provide training to the unqualified and underqualified teachers who are currently teaching and would like to upgrade their qualifications (Chimombo, 2009b).

Public schools can also learn from the advantages of the private system. Giving the Head greater power over the staffing of their school could provide them with stronger tools to motivate teachers. If the Head had more power to dismiss, or at least discipline in a more significant way, like docking pay, the Head would be much more able to motivate teachers.

⁴⁹ Although only one public school was involved in this research, this point was reiterated by teachers in both public and private schools, as well as the Malawian Minister of Secondary Education, Chikondano Mussa.

⁵⁰ Teacher's salaries are standardized throughout the country and are based on a combination of qualifications and experience.

5.6 Salary, Workload and Teacher Turnover

All three interviews with teachers in the private sector yielded complaints concerning dissatisfaction with their salary and workload s compared to the teachers employed in the public school system. The private school teachers interviewed understood very well that they not only had much lower salaries than teachers had in the public system, with wages around half of a public secondary school teachers starting wage, but they also taught significantly more classes (Mkango Head;). These complaints were most pronounced at Pleasant View Academy, the most economically successful of the schools. Teachers seemed aware of the high profits the school was making, and felt cheated that they were not receiving a greater share of the profits.

The low wages and large workloads at LFP schools causes dissatisfaction leading to a high rate of turnover amongst teachers. Since teachers often have little allegiance to their employer, they will happily leave as soon as they find a job with higher pay or better working conditions. When asked if someone would stay until the end of the semester, if they found a better job elsewhere, one teacher stated:

[I]mmediately they will leave. That is what has been happening here. You find that you have some teachers this year, once that particular teacher has a chance or opportunity somewhere they immediately they leave (Pleasant View Teacher 1).

This situation was also clear to the students, who complained that teachers sometimes only came for a short time, but understood that these jobs paid poorly compared to other teaching positions and it was for this reason that teachers often left.

This was the case for both of the qualified teachers working full time at Pleasant View. Once they had finished university, they would teach at a private school while waiting for their posting in the public system. When their posting came up, they would leave the school

immediately. One qualified teacher said he would be happy to stay at Pleasant View “but that would depend on salaries” (Pleasant View Teacher 2). Although these teachers are more qualified than the rest of the staff, it appears that they are only at the school for a short time. Furthermore, knowing that these jobs are temporary, teachers may not put a great deal of effort into their work, significantly decreasing their value to the school.

The frequent turnover of teachers poses a number of difficulties to students trying to ready themselves for national exams. As was explained by a female student from Pleasant View, “[the] exchange of teachers, most the time it brings some confusion mainly to students, because someone comes with different views” (Pleasant View Student 3). Not only are students forced to adapt to new teaching methods, but also when teachers leave without warning there can be no communication with the incoming teacher concerning what has and has not been taught up to that point in the semester.

While the transient nature of teachers in the private sector can pose significant difficulties to the students and the schools, this does not need to be the case, nor is it the case with all LFP schools. At a school in Nkata Bay, an interview was conducted with the school owner in which he outlined a number of programs that were implemented to encourage teachers to stay at the school. First of all a pension plan was developed, in which the teachers contribute 5% and the school contributes 10% of their salary each month. According to the school owner, it is required by law to provide a pension to teachers; however, none of the other teachers or owners mentioned the existence of a pension plan at their school, when they were asked about teachers’ pay.

In addition, the teachers employed at the school in Nkata Bay organized a lending cooperative to allow them to have access to loans. This is particularly beneficial in Malawi

where access to credit is quite scarce, especially without collateral. All teachers contributed Mk 30 000 over three months, and from this pool of money teachers could borrow at a rate of 20% interest. While the principle was maintained, the interest that accrued was paid out between teachers at the end of each year. It is important to note that none of the teachers at this school were interviewed. According to the Head, all of the teachers agreed to join the cooperative; however, without speaking directly with the teachers it is not possible to know how they feel about this system.

Not only do these type of programs encourage teachers to stay, but also if a teacher were to leave the school without warning, they would be risking the loss of their pension and their investment in the lending cooperative. While these programs are relatively simple to operate, according to the Nkata Bay Head they have proven to be effective in decreasing teacher turnover, and not teachers have left since September, when the program began.

Within the public system teacher turnover is much less of a problem because teacher assignments are controlled centrally by the Ministry of Education. If a teacher wants to change schools within the public sector, they are unable to pick up and leave their current position without warning. Instead, they must apply with the Ministry of Education for a transfer. This allows the ministry to maintain a high degree of control over the movement of teachers. As a result, schools are not forced to compete with one another to fill teaching positions. This is especially important for schools in less desirable locations, such as rural areas of Malawi. Since qualified teachers are in short supply, having to compete for them would leave these schools at a distinct disadvantage.

On the other hand, this policy severely restricts the ability of the schools administrators to manage their staff. As mentioned above, the school is unable to fire teachers, and instead is only

able to request their transfer. Furthermore, the Head and Deputy are unable to select and hire the teachers that they require, despite being in the position to have the greatest understanding of the school's staffing needs.

5.7 Cost Efficiency

In Malawi, education provision is exceedingly expensive when considered in terms of GDP per capita, making cost efficiency extremely important. Although the low wages at LFP schools can have some adverse effects on the teachers and the work they do, it also greatly decreased operational costs of the school. While it is difficult to estimate the total cost of operating an LFP school, it has been established that within the developing world, teacher's salaries make up the majority of a school's recurrent costs (Tooley & Dixon, 2006).

All of the schools involved in the study, both public and private follow a similar schedule in their daily operations. Each school has four classes, one for each form, with nine periods a day, five days a week, totaling 180 periods each week. These periods are distributed relatively evenly between teachers, with the Head and Deputy also teaching some classes.

At the public school there were approximately 20 teachers, at each of the private schools there were far fewer. Pleasant View, which had nearly as many students as Mkango, employed only seven teachers. Therefore, while the average teacher at the CDSS was teaching nine periods a week, the average teacher at Pleasant View was teaching nearly 26. Furthermore, since teachers' salaries at these schools are no more than half that of their public school counterpart, each period taught at Mkango costs six times what it costs at Pleasant View in terms of teachers' pay.

While this appears to make private schools significantly more cost efficient than CDSSs, this is not necessarily true. While periods taught in private schools are less costly in terms of teachers' pay there are a number of other factors to consider before claims of cost efficiency can be verified. First, pass rates of the school must be considered. Although a school may operate at low costs, if most of the students are failing it is hard to argue that this school is efficient. When asked about the quality and higher efficiency of LFP schools the response of the Minister of Education supports this conclusion:

In terms of quality and efficiency... they can't provide adequate teaching materials and they can't provide adequate qualified teachers, these two affect the quality of the services that they deliver. They should automatically be substandard. And learning, we can't even talk of efficiency there. (Mrs. Musa, Minister of Secondary Education)

However, according to the student results at the schools participating in the research this does not appear to be the case.

Enquiries about pass rates were made when interviewing Heads of each of the institutions.⁵¹ Although the sample size is certainly not large enough to be representative of other schools, this information helps to frame the strength of the schools involved. Based on the information provided by the Heads, the table below shows the pass rates for three of the participating schools (Mkango Head; Njanti Head; Chule Head).

Table 3: School Pass Rates

School (Year)	Pass Rate in JC (Ratio)	Pass Rate in MSCE
Mkango (2012)	86% (105/122)	36% (30/84)
Njati (2012)	50%	63%

⁵¹ While enquires were made with the Pleasant View Head, he said pass rates were between 80 and 90%, stipulating if these rates were for JC or MSCE, and without referencing the ratio of students who wrote and who passed. For this reason the data seemed unreliable and was not included.

Chule (2009) ⁵²	97% (29/30)	68% (21/31)
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Pass rates highlighted in Table 3 vary greatly from school to school and from JC to MSCE. While data for other years was not gathered, in most instances the Heads said that these numbers are representative of past years. The only exception to this was the Njati JC pass rate, which the Head claimed was especially low because many of the students in form 2 had done their form 1 elsewhere. This is likely true as the school has been growing, and it is generally the case that pass rates on JC exams are higher than on MSCE exams. Although the sample size is simply not large enough to draw any generalized conclusions, the pass rates do not imply that the LFP schools in the study are of a lesser quality than the CDSSs.

The low cost of private schools also fails to take into account class size. Within the Malawian education system, there does not seem to be a consensus on the ideal class size. In the early 2000s, the Ministry of Education changed CDSSs to selective rather than open enrolment, capping the class size at 45 students (Chimombo, 2009b). However, according to the class sizes observed at Mkango, which were over 100 students, this certainly is no longer the case.

At both Njati and Chule, the cost of teaching a class is much lower than at Mkango in terms of teachers pay; however, there are also fewer students in the classes. Although these two schools are only just starting out and it is likely that they will grow in the coming years, at this time the cost per student is much higher than at Pleasant View where enrolment is greater.

In the public system, the Ministry of Education controls enrolment (Mkango Head) so schools can have full enrolment even when they are first opening. Although the efficiency of having over 100 students per class may also be called into question.

⁵² Pass rates for Chule come from 4 years ago, before they were forced to close for a year, so that a larger sample was given.

Another factor working against efficiency of the private sector is that savings that accrue due to low cost per period are not necessarily passed on to the students. At Pleasant View, the number of students is approximately 400, with each student paying Mk 13,000⁵³ per term, totaling over Mk 15 million per year. There are seven teachers being paid approximately Mk 35 000⁵⁴ per month, making the total cost of salaries Mk 2 940 000. Although, there are other expenses associated with the school's operation, in the developing world teacher salaries generally make up 80 – 96% of recurrent costs (Tooley & Dixon, 2006). From this, total recurrent costs are estimated to be under Mk four million⁵⁵, less than one quarter of the estimated total school fees. It is therefore expected that the school owner is turning a significant profit.

Although this means that the benefits from the cost efficiency of Pleasant View accrue with the owner more than with the consumer, as LFP schools grow in number, making the market more competitive, these schools have to the potential to decrease their fees, while remaining profitable.

5.8 Low Fee Private Schools: Moving Forward

There are clearly many similarities, differences, advantages and disadvantages to LFP schooling as compared to CDSSs. This provides important insights into improvements and growth that can occur in both sectors. The benefits of one not only point out the deficiencies in the other, but also provide a possible course for improvement. However, for this to be the case greater cooperation between the two sectors should first be realized. The breadth of separation

⁵³ It is possible that some student receive bursaries and do not pay the full amount. However, it is not expected to decrease school income significantly.

⁵⁴ This is most likely a slight over estimate, although it is unknown what the teacher's salaries were exactly.

⁵⁵ This assumes that teacher's salaries make up only 80% of recurrent costs, which is at the low end of Tooley and Dixon's data, making total recurrent costs as high as possible within this range.

between the public and private sectors is made clear by comments of the Minister of Education concerning teacher training: “we are the only trainers of teachers and we train just for the public schools and not for the private schools, because we don't train in excess” (Chikondano Mussa, Minister of Secondary Education). To consider training teachers for the private sector ‘training in excess’ is to forget that all schools, both public and private, are working toward the same goal of educating Malawians, and as such should have the full attention of the government, whether they are publicly or privately managed. It is unclear whether this separation is due to a general unwillingness of the government to reach out to these schools, or if it is due to a shortage of resources that are already stretched thin trying to provide for the public sector. What is clear, however, is that both public and private schools play large roles in the provision of secondary education making coordination and communication between these two halves all the more important.

Although schools must take responsibility for the education they are providing, in order for significant changes to occur in the private sector, the government should play a leading role. This can be accomplished in several ways. First, through measured and well executed regulation, which encourages LFP schools to provide higher quality education, without increasing costs and financially excluding an even greater portion of the Malawian population. Second, government funding providing subsidies for materials, including textbooks, and targeted bursaries, allowing impoverished members of the population the ability to attend LFP schools. Finally, providing the means for LFP schools to improve themselves and the quality of education they provide, by creating a teacher training system specific to under-qualified teachers in the private sector, and by making available information concerning best practices for the operation of an LFP.

LFP schools are currently playing a very significant role in Malawi, but there is still the potential for these schools to provide even greater provision of education of a higher quality in the future.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to develop a greater understanding of Low Fee Private schools in Malawi, based on the qualitative analysis of four secondary schools. More specifically this research aims to answer the question – what is the potential of LFP schools to contribute to secondary education in Malawi – as well as a number of related sub-questions.

Through observation, and interviews with students, teachers, Heads, school owners and the Malawian Minister of Secondary Education, information was gathered on topics that were considered important to participants or deemed relevant by the researcher, revealing a number of themes analyzed throughout the text. These themes relate to the interplay between the expectations and experiences of the stakeholders. While the relevant themes certainly differ from one category of stakeholder to the next, there was also significant overlap in what they considered important. It is through the exploration of these themes that the questions at the heart of the research have been answered.

After answering to the primary research question and summarizing the main arguments associated with the themes mentioned above, this chapter will then outline the limitations of the study and the areas of research for which further investigation would be beneficial. It is important to note that the findings that follow provide only a glimpse of the complex structures and dynamics that exist within the private and public education sectors.

6.2 What is the Potential of Low Fee Private Schools in Malawi?

Assessing the potential of LFP schools to contribute to the Malawian secondary education system is a complex matter. It is clear, that in their current state LFP schools

contribute significantly to secondary school provision. Although it is not possible for private education to continue growing as it has in the recent past, LFP education still maintains the potential to grow and improve. The contributions of these schools to secondary education in Malawi can be explored along two axis: quality of education, and quantity of education.

LFP schools have contributed greatly to extending secondary education provision within the country. In the past 20 years, LFP secondary education has ‘mushroomed’ in Malawi (Rose, 2002) and currently 30% of secondary education comes from private schools (Chimombo, 2009b). However, due to widespread poverty, private education, including LFP is unaffordable for the majority of Malawians. For this reason it is unlikely that private secondary education will continue to grow as it has in the past.

School quality appears to be comparable between the LFPs and the publically run CDSS observed. Although data is limited amongst the schools observed, there was no evidence that LFP schools were of lower overall quality in terms of MSCE and JC standardized exams. For Malawi as a whole, in 2006, pass rates were 43% for private schools and 48% for public schools in Malawi (Kamwendo, 2010). Although LFPs maintain a standard of education similar to CDSSs, there is still the potential for significant improvements to be realized.

Despite creating similar educational outcomes, significant variations exist between CDSS and LFP schools. Public schools appear to have more qualified teachers and manage teacher assignments centrally, avoiding problems with teacher turnover which are were prevalent in the private schools observed. LFP schools are more cost efficient, and managers control the hiring and firing for their school, which provides a useful tool for teacher motivation.

These differences reveal areas in both CDSSs and LFPs, in which school quality could be improved. In particular, LFP schools could be improved by employing a greater number of

qualified teachers and paying higher wages to increase teacher retention. However, in order for more qualified teachers to be available, teacher training at the university level would have to be expanded, which represents an investment the government is either not willing or able to make. Similarly, paying higher wages in order to retain teachers, would drive up the cost of LFP education, which is already out of reach for the majority of Malawians.

It is evident that such areas of improvement are not without financial trade-offs. It is unclear what the net benefit would be of paying higher wages to teachers, if it drives up the cost, excluding certain students from receiving an education. Therefore, it is important to identify areas of improvement which are not associated with a significant financial burden. To this end, two, closely tied, areas for improvement have been identified: discipline and parent teacher associations.

Discipline contributes greatly to school quality. According to the observations of the researcher, discipline varies significantly from one school to the next and from one teacher to the next. Both students, teachers and Heads interviewed attest to the importance of discipline in creating positive education outcomes. However, there are many students who do not wish to attend a strict school, there are LFP schools which maintain low levels of discipline.

The government could set standards for discipline, the same way as it sets regulations for other aspects of private schools. However, such standards would be difficult to monitor and enforce. As it stands, students are generally responsible for selecting the school they wish to attend, and some schools only communicate with parents when there is a problem with their child, limiting parental involvement in the school. Encouraging parental involvement would increase school accountability, improving discipline and overall school quality. Therefore, establishing strong parent teacher associations in LFP schools represents an opportunity to

significantly increase school quality without increasing the cost of education. In these ways private schools can increase quality without increasing cost, unambiguously increasing their contribution to the education system.

There is also the potential to improve education through partnerships between government and private schools. Although such partnerships would likely come with a financial burden, the potential benefits would be vast, allowing the government to harness the efficiencies of the private system, while enforcing regulations and improving the schools. A closer public-private partnership would provide a channel for the government to supply bursaries to underprivileged students, allowing them to attend an LFP which meets a certain standard of education. Similarly, public funds could be used to supply books and materials to schools which satisfy government regulations. In this way education could be extended to more underprivileged students while encouraging LFP schools to meet certain regulations, such as holding PTA meetings once a semester. Although it is difficult to assess the viability of such collaborations, it is up to the government to take a more active role engaging the private sector, which up to this point, it has appeared unwilling to do.

6.3 Areas of Future Research

While this research into the potential of LFP schools within Malawi adds unique insight to the existing body of literature, the observations and conclusions of this research, as well as its limitations, reveal numerous areas remaining, where further research and analysis would prove beneficial. This thesis will conclude with a number of such suggestions.

Expanding the scope of the research to include more schools, in more geographic areas is the most obvious way of improving upon and intensifying such a study. Providing a

representative sample of schools while still maintaining the depth of investigation would be useful in developing analysis that is useful to a much greater range of individuals and schools. Expanding the research to include a greater variety of participants including parents and guardians would also be fruitful. Research of this nature could then be used, not only, by the school or individual, but also on the macro-level to provide insights capable of guiding government planning and regulations.

Teacher Turnover is another area of research that could be of significant value in improving LFP schools. This research revealed teacher turnover to be a significant problem at some LFP schools, although it did not appear to be an insurmountable obstacle. For this reason, greater research into this topic could yield significant improvements to LFP schools by providing insights on how to improve teacher retentions, benefiting both teachers, students and schools.

Finally, greater research into the topic of discipline at LFP schools would create a greater understanding of the influence of strong discipline on positive educational outcomes. Research on this topic could prove beneficial to both public and private schools at both the primary and secondary levels. Furthermore, it would provide insight into why discipline varies so significantly between schools, and how discipline could be improved at schools where it is lacking.

6.4 Conclusion

We want to complement the government effort towards offering quality education, because there are few secondary schools, yet there are so many primary schools, and if you look at education of Malawi, the system of education is a bottleneck system. Because you do have a lot of students in primary school then few in secondary school. (Nkata Bay Head)

Private education and especially LFP secondary schooling has become an important part of the Malawian education system, functioning independently of the public education and largely outside of government control. Most students considered the LFP they were attending to be providing a satisfactory education, although these schools are certainly not without deficiencies. Identifying the shortcoming of these schools highlights the potential to further their contribution. It is by addressing these deficiencies that it will become possible to exploit fully the potential of LFP schools.

LFP education has arisen, largely as a response to shortcomings of the public system. It has expanded rapidly in the recent past, and although it is unsure what the future holds for LFP education, there is clearly potential for further growth and improvements, and the continued expansion of these schools contributions to secondary education. In the future, it may be beneficial to decrease the separation between the two sectors and promote greater public-private partnership.

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