A critical realist exploration of the emergence, development, management and sustainability of a Christian private institution of higher education in Malawi

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by

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Abstract

This study was prompted by an interest in exploring ways in which the development of private higher education in Malawi could be more sustainable. It examines the challenges that private institutions of higher education face in different contexts and the underlying causes of these challenges.

The aim of the study was to explore the emergence of private higher education (PHE) in Malawi, its management, development, the challenges it faces and the generative mechanisms of these challenges. The research is a case study of one of the earliest private institutions of higher education in Malawi. The institution is owned and operated by a Christian church organisation that has been operating a network of private primary and secondary schools and health centres since its establishment in Malawi in the early 1890s.

Critical realism is used as an underlabourer for its stance on ontological, epistemological and ethical assumptions of reality and its views on agency and structure. Two theoretical frameworks - complexity theory and transformational leadership theories - are used as lenses to help make sense of the nature of social organisations and also as heuristic devices for organising and making sense of data.

Data were collected using qualitative interviews, archival document content analysis and observation. Twenty participants were purposefully selected for interviews. The participants comprised a senior officer at the MoEST headquarters, proprietors, members of the top management team of the institution, administrative assistants, heads of academic and non-academic departments, teachers and non-teaching staff and students. Abstracted data were analysed using inductive, abductive and retroductive modes of inference.

The study established that the emergence of private higher education in Malawi was generated by a number of mechanisms. These include the need to survive the threat to socioeconomic development posed by global trends in scientific and technological issues that heavily rely on access to the knowledge economy; the need to respond to demand for equity and access to higher

education; the need to carry out the mission of the Christian church; government's failure to expand and widen access to higher education; and the agential need to survive economic demands.

The research findings indicate that a critical challenge that the emergence of private higher education faced was the lack of adequate and efficient structures and systems in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to expeditiously process applications to establish and accredit, monitor and control the development of private higher education institutions. It was also found that the challenges that the private higher education faces include high level of authoritarian governance and management practices, weak institutional management and control systems and structure, secularisation, lack of adequate funds to meet operation and capital development costs, facilities and resources to support teaching – learning functions, learner support facilities and services and a critical shortage of appropriately qualified administrative and academic personnel.

The underlying causes of the challenges include the perceived threat to personal power and survival; fear of apostasy and secularisation; cultural values, adverse socioeconomic conditions; lack of diverse sources of funding, ineffective communication skills; weak governance systems and structures; low level of self-control; unfavourable attitudes towards educational institutions and the need to restore equity.

To make private institutions of higher learning more sustainable, the study recommends that governance practices be guided by clear structures, policies and guidelines in the interest of transparency and accountability. It also recommends that government works in close partnership with private providers, reviews unfair policies concerning government scholarships, subsidizes the cost of materials for instruction and infrastructure development, and provides technical assistance to prospective and active providers. Lastly, the study recommends that private providers form an association so as to share experiences and to collectively deal with issues of common interest and concern.

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Acronyms used in the thesis

AD: *Anno Domini* (In the year of our Lord);

CAS: Complex adaptive systems;

CEC: Credential Evaluation Committee;

CODESRIA: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa;

CR: Critical realism;

CT: Complexity theory;

DoEP: Department of Education Planning;

EFA: Education for All;

ESD: Education for Sustainable Development;

EU: European Union;

GATS: Genera; Agreement on Trade in Services;

HIV and AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome;

HRP&D: Human Resource Planning and Development;

ICT: Information and Communication Technology;

MACRA: Malawi Communication Regulatory Authority;

MoEST: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology;

MPSR: Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper;

MSCE: Malawi School Certificate of Education;

MTL: Malawi Telecommunication Limited;

MZUNI: Mzuzu University;

NCHE: National Council for Higher Education;

NGO: Non-governmental Organisation;

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

PHE: Private higher education;

PIF: Policy & Investment Framework;

PIsHE: Private institution(s) of higher education;

SAMEC: Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education;

SARUA: Southern African Regional Universities Association;

TL: Transformational leadership;

TSL: Transformational school leadership;

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation;

UNIMA: University of Malawi;

US: United States of America;

USD: United States Dollar;

VC: Vice Chancellor;

WBWP: World Bank Working Paper No. 182;

WCHE: World Conference on Higher Education: Vision and Action;

Chapter One
Introduction

If the first challenge of change is to ensure that it is desirable, and the second challenge is to make it doable, then the biggest challenge of all is to make it durable and sustainable (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 2).

1. Introduction

This is a case study that focuses on the emergence, development and challenges in private higher education in Malawi. In this chapter I give a background to the study, reasons why I carried out the study, and discuss the significance of the findings.

1.1 Background to the study

The motivation to engage in this project originated from both personal and intellectual challenges. First, I was a head teacher at three different private primary schools. I also worked as a principal at two private secondary schools. While I taught in and headed these schools I experienced numerous challenges, the most serious concerning how to motivate the staff to love their work and perform their duties professionally. Another challenge was how to effectively manage school resources and facilities. Although I was a professionally qualified teacher, I realised that to be an effective leader and manager, I needed to acquire more knowledge and skills. I therefore went to Rhodes University in South Africa where I obtained a Master of Education degree in Educational Leadership and Management. The skills and the knowledge that I acquired, more especially about organisation development technologies, have proved extremely useful in my career.

Later I was appointed as registrar at a two-year diploma-granting seminary. After working for two years, I was asked to head the institution and transform it from a two-year diploma-granting institution into a private, degree-granting institution. This appointment posed new challenges to me both personally and professionally. A major one was how to work with the proprietor so that together we could build an institution of higher education worthy of the name. In the course of leading and managing the institution, I visited my counterparts in other private institutions of higher education so as to understand, appreciate and learn from their experiences.

It was from the observations that I made during these visits and the ensuing discussions that I had with my colleagues and other stakeholders that I became more aware of the serious and diverse challenges that Malawi's private institutions of higher education face. I observed that although the institutions were located in different places and governed by different boards, most of the challenges tended to be similar in nature. It aroused in me an urgent desire to seek to understand the causes of these challenges and to explore ways of dealing with them.

The motivation to deal with the challenges became more urgent when I observed the enthusiasm and excitement in both the young people and the adults who were admitted into the college. They were thrilled at having an opportunity to access higher education and face the prospect of obtaining a degree. Some of the adults had taken unpaid leave from their employing organisations so as to upgrade themselves from being a certificate or diploma-holder in various academic fields to a degree-holder in their fields of interest. Indeed, some of the learners enrolled in academic programmes that were not their primary interest at all. They enrolled just because those were the programmes the institution offered at that time.

The climax was when I attended the first graduation ceremonies, first in our own institution and later on, in a sister institution. I watched as each student strolled forward to the podium, received a degree and proudly waved it to the audience, to a spouse, to children, to parents and guardians. Yet, when I observed what each of the campuses looked like - the size and quality of the buildings, the grounds, the roads and so on - and recalled the challenges that the institutions were and still are facing - inadequate academic programmes, under-qualified teachers, inadequate support staff, teaching-learning equipment, resources and facilities - I was made keenly aware of how difficult it seemed to be to create a higher education institution of learning that was sustainable and capable of producing quality graduates. This further prompted me to embark on this research project.

Hence, in terms of my personal goals, I was interested in understanding and explaining the causes of the challenges that the development of private higher education faces in Malawi. My assumption was that it must be possible to effectively manage, eliminate, weaken or prevent the challenges from occurring. However, I also realised that one needs to understand the *nature* and *causes* of the challenges first before one can explore ways to address them. This led to recognizing and acknowledging the intellectual nature of the challenge.

Intellectually, I sought to carry out an investigation of the causes of the challenges. Hence I looked for a theoretical and methodological framework that would enable me to understand the nature and the causes of the challenges so as explain why private higher education was in the condition it was. I could then possibly explore ways that were more likely to enable private higher education to serve society better and this is the focus of this research project.

In the following paragraphs I present a more detailed context of the study. I first describe the introduction and development of the Western European formal education in Malawi. Next, I discuss the issues that I sought to investigate and the reasons why I thought it necessary to carry out the investigation. I elaborate on what I sought to accomplish and discuss the significance of the study. I conclude the chapter by summarizing the contents of each chapter that comprise this thesis.

1.2 Context of the study

In the following section I give a brief background to the introduction of education in Malawi, and summarise the development of both public and private higher education.

1.2.1 Introduction and development of the British primary and secondary education systems in Malawi

It is not possible for me to give a comprehensive review of the introduction and development of Western European formal education in Malawi given the scope of this study. What follows is therefore a brief overview.

Western European formal education was first introduced in Malawi by the Christian missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland in 1875 (Chimombo, 2003). Other Christian missionaries of different church denominations who came after them - like the Catholic Church, the Seventh-day Adventists, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and the Zambezi Industrial Mission - also established their own schools. Later on some of the Malawian converts to Christianity started their own church institutions and opened schools too (Wills, 1973; Banda, 1982 and Chimombo, 2003).

1.2.2 Motives of Christian church missionaries

There were various motives that influenced the Christian missionaries to establish schools. The motives included the desire to encourage literacy so as to enable the converts to read the Bible and the need to offer religious instruction in which case education was used as a strategy for evangelization. The missionaries also wanted to train teachers to complement their efforts and the schools also served as institutions for the training of pastors, evangelists and catechists and for imparting knowledge and skills that were considered useful for the socio-economic development of the country. In addition, the missionaries wanted to demonstrate that Africans were neither intellectually inferior to Europeans nor uneducable as some of the Europeans tended to assume (Wills, 1973; Banda, 1982, pp. 1 and 16 – 47; Lulat, 2003, p. 18 and Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 33).

Thus, the motives of the Christian missionaries in offering education were religious and socio-economic in nature. Furthermore, as I found out in this study, some of the Christian churches provide education as a strategy for political redress whereas some offer it as a strategy for evangelism (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.1.3).

1.2.3 The role of the British colonial government in offering education

Although the British had declared a protectorate over Malawi in 1891 and established a colonial administration, it took 45 years for the British colonial government to play a role in providing education. The Department of Education was put in place in 1936 as an attempt to implement one of the recommendations that the Phelps-Stoke Commission had made to the British Colonial Office on the state of education in British colonial Africa (Lulat, 2003, p. 18).

The Department was mandated to supervise and to partly fund the provision of education. However, it was only twenty-one years later, in 1957, when the Department of Education actually began to provide educational grants to the Christian church schools so as to subsidise the operations costs (Wills, 1973; Banda, 1982, p. 70 and Chimombo, 2003, p. 414). Hence, in Malawi - as in other countries in Africa, such as Kenya, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe - it was the Christian churches that had been responsible for the introduction and provision of basic education (Lulat, 2003, p. 18). Thus, in 2008, the Christian churches in Malawi operated 58 percent of all the primary schools (Malawi, Department of Education Planning [Malawi. DoEP], 2008, p. 82).

1.2.4 Structure of the education system in Malawi

It may be pertinent at this juncture to say that the system of education in Malawi runs on an 8- 4 - 4 cycle. There are three levels of education: the primary, with an eight-year cycle, secondary which runs a four-year cycle leading to an award of the Malawi School Certificate of Education, and tertiary and vocational institutions that run a two-year cycle leading to the award of a certificate or a diploma. Higher education humanities programmes run a four-year cycle whereas science programmes run a five-year cycle (Malawi. DoEP, 2008, p. 12).

1.2.5 Providers of education in Malawi

Currently there are three agencies that provide formal education in Malawi: First, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), in which case the MoEST directly establishes a school, recruits both the teaching and non-teaching staff, recruits learners and supplies the teaching-learning materials, resources and facilities. Second, the MoEST and a private agency co-manage and operate a school together. In this case, the MoEST pays staff salaries and, in most cases, also supplies the teaching-learning materials and resources and the agency owns the property and manages and supervises the staff. Most of the faith-based primary and secondary schools operate under this arrangement and are known as grant-aided schools.

The third is private agencies. Such an agency - an organisation, a company or an individual - provides one or all the three levels of education without or with minimal support of the MoEST.

The support that MoEST offers in this case is often in the form of supervision, and/or the supply of teaching-learning materials. Thus, in 2008, for example, religious denominations operated 58 percent of primary schools in the country; of 971 secondary schools, 373 were private and 19 of them were grant-aided. The Christian church denominations are also involved in providing post-secondary vocational and technical as well as higher education (Banda, 1982 and Malawi. DoEP, 2008, pp. 44 and 82). It is important to note that although some religious organisations operate schools in conjunction with the MoEST in the form of grant-aided arrangements, some religious organisations operate schools solely on their own with minimal support from MoEST in the form of supervision, staff development programmes and the supply of basic teaching and learning materials like textbooks and visual aids.

1.2.6 Higher education in Malawi

In 1955 the British colonial government established a University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland to provide higher education to the citizens of the three countries: Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi). However, when Malawi gained independence from the British government it established its own university, the University of Malawi (UNIMA) in 1965 (Wills, 1973 and Lulat, 2003). In order to address the rise in demand for access to higher education and equity a second national university opened in 1997, Mzuzu University. However, the two institutions failed to satisfy the demand for access. To address this and many other challenges (see Chapter Two, Section 2.9.1), government invited the private sector to participate in providing higher education (PIF, 2001; Chimombo, 2003 and Malawi.MoEST, 2008).

Thus in August 1994 Christian church denominations started offering private higher education programmes. By 2004, of the six higher education institutions, four of them were operated by Christian churches. In Section 1 above I described how I became involved in the provision and supervision of private higher education and the motivation for this study. In the section that follows I present the issues that I set out to study and what I wanted to achieve.

1.3 Statement of the problem

At the time I carried out the study there were five government-accredited private institutions of higher education in Malawi. Almost all the institutions started their operations from existing physical facilities, infrastructure and resources that proprietors previously used either as office buildings, houses or tertiary and vocational education institutions. In some cases the available infrastructure, facilities and personnel tended to be unfit for the purpose of offering higher education. Therefore, I wanted to understand how private higher education emerged, the challenges that private institutions of higher education in Malawi face, the effects of the challenges on the development of private higher education and the possible underlying causes of the challenges.

Thus the research was driven by four questions: First, what conditions made the emergence of private higher education in Malawi possible? Second, what challenges does private higher education in Malawi face? Third, what are the underlying causal factors of these challenges? And fourth, how can the development of private higher education in Malawi be made more sustainable?

1.4 Purposes of the study

As mentioned above, the private institutions of higher education play a significant role in Malawi in making higher education more accessible and more equitable. Therefore, I had three main purposes in mind in carrying out this study.

First, as a practitioner in the field of educational leadership and management, I sought to understand and explain the nature, causes, and effects of the challenges that the development of private higher education in Malawi faced. Second, I wanted to explore ways that could make private higher education more sustainable in Malawi. In this study, I used the concept of sustainability to imply enabling conditions for an institution to perform its core business better. I indicated in Section 1.1 that my assumption was that it was possible to effectively deal with the challenges if we understood their nature and the underlying causal factors.

The third purpose was that I wanted to communicate with other scholars and stakeholders regarding the development of private higher education in Malawi. My intention was to prompt further research in the field of education leadership and management. In this way I believed we could collectively work on the transformation of higher education so that it may serve society better. It has been observed that the challenges that higher education faces "require the strong involvement not only of governments and the higher education institutions but also all the stakeholders" (World Conference on Higher Education: Vision and Action [WCHE], 1998, p. 3). The study was thus also an attempt to galvanise other stakeholders.

1.5 Goals of the study

The study has two goals. First, I wanted to identify and explain contextual power structures and the underlying causal mechanisms that tend to generate, shape and condition the challenges that the development of private higher education faces in Malawi. Second, I wanted to explore ways that might enable private higher education in Malawi to be more sustainable. I indicated in Section 1 above that private institutions were making higher education more accessible and equitable; hence, there is a need to make them perform better.

1.6 The significance of the research

I believed that the findings of the research would provide stakeholders in the field of higher education with an understanding of the nature of the underlying causes of the challenges that private higher education (PHE) faces in Malawi. The stakeholders could in turn use the findings to inform public policy on the management of PHE. They could in addition, design appropriate and effective change interventions that may transform private higher education and make it more sustainable. Hence, the study could contribute to transformation in the field of educational leadership and management.

Also, PHE in Malawi has not have been thoroughly researched. Through this study other scholars will hopefully become aware of the existence of PHE in Malawi. In turn, they might want to carry out further research into other pertinent issues. In this way scholars and practitioners in the field could enlarge and deepen their understanding of the management of higher education.

Lastly, the study process itself may benefit the research participants due to what Wright (2009, p. 71) calls "catalytic validity" which refers to "the degree to which those being studied come to understand their own reality in order to prepare them to transform it". That is to say, by engaging in the study, participants may benefit from the interaction and the sharing of ideas.

1.7 Outline of chapters

In the current chapter, I introduced the study by describing the historical background to the emergence of Western European education in Malawi, and briefly highlighted the Christian missionary and the British colonial government's roles in the provision of education. Furthermore, I introduced myself and my personal and intellectual motivation for the study. I closed the chapter by presenting the problem that I intended to study, why I felt this study was significant and what I wanted to achieve through the research.

Chapter Two contextualises higher education in Malawi. I explore the development of public and private higher education and the challenges that the two types of higher education tend to face such as level funding; governance; availability of appropriately qualified teachers and other personnel, infrastructure, resources and facilities and academic programmes. I close the chapter by focusing on the background to the emergence of private higher education in Malawi.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework of the study. I selected the complexity theory (CT). Complexity theory attempts to describe patterns of social relationships, interactions and interdependences in social systems to account for organisational performance and transformation. It pays attention to the effects of new properties that tend to emerge from the relationships as a system adapts itself to its environment in order to survive. I summarise the principles upon which the theory is based, and discuss the limitations of the theory.

Chapter Four focuses on assumptions and presuppositions that guided the choice of the research approach, methods and the tools that I used in collecting and analysing data in the study. The chapter discusses assumptions about the nature of reality, causes and causality and beliefs about agency viewed from the critical realist perspective.

Chapter Five discusses the design of the study. The chapter presents arguments for selecting the case study method. It further describes how research participants were selected, the methods that I used to collect data, how I analyzed data, the findings and how I presented them. In addition, the chapter describes how I handled issues of credibility and research ethics.

Chapter Six contextualises the emergence of private higher education in Malawi and the challenges that it faces. I contextualize the findings by utilizing conceptual frameworks drawn from complexity theory. I apply three concepts: emergence, complexity leadership and requisite complexity.

Chapter Seven focuses on surfacing social structures and possible underlying causal mechanisms. The chapter examines patterns of social relationships, other structures and the links that tend to exist between them and the challenges. I carry out the examination by utilizing retroduction as a mode of inference.

Chapter Eight summarizes the research findings. It explores ways of making private higher education more sustainable by paying attention to existing social structures, and causal links between the structures and the challenges in private higher education.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I advanced my motivation for carrying out the study. I contextualised the study, the problem that I investigated, the purpose, goal and significance of the study.

In the next chapter I review the literature on the development of higher education. I summarise the values and core mission of higher education and how the mission has changed over the years. I also discuss the history of the provision of higher education in Malawi, the developments that have taken place and the results of the new developments. I start the review with the development of higher education in Western Europe and the United States, Africa in general and Malawi in particular.

Chapter Two

Context of higher education

> *Universities … have been among the most privileged places for the advancement of thought and culture…. growth of knowledge, particularly the scientific knowledge that has become the dominant force of the modern world…. They are at the frontiers of discovery but guard the heritage of the past… enshrine both hope and nostalgia…. linked to ways of life which may be out of date but which, since they are collective stereotypes, continue to appeal to the imagination of the young and to guide many of their choices (*International Association of Universities, as cited in Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 19).

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I contextualise the study by exploring the development of higher education and the challenges that it faces in different regions. I stated in Chapter One that it was Christian missionaries from Western Europe who introduced formal education in Malawi (see Chapter One, Section 1.2.1). Some researchers have observed that higher education in Africa tends to reflect the influences of different European countries that colonized particular countries (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Hence, I trace the development of higher education in Western Europe including the United States of America and Africa and the challenges that it faced.

In the review I examine the core mission of higher education and the evolution that it has undergone in recent years. I also examine its value and financing and the implications on the provision of higher education. I close the chapter by giving a brief description of the emergence of private higher education in Malawi.

2.2 Higher education

In this section I present a very limited review of the development of both public and private higher education. I highlight some of the major challenges that higher education faces. Western Europe and the United States have had an enormous influence on the provision and support as well as the weakening of higher education in Africa (Bloom, Canning & Chang, 2006). The influence stems from the Western European governments' colonization and the post-colonial domination over the African states. Assie-Lumumba (2006, p. 20) observed that in Africa:

> The universities and other higher education institutions reflect the educational and cultural traditions of the respective colonial powers… that created or shaped the contemporary African education systems, with the recent but powerful imprint of regional and national dynamics.

On the other hand, the United States of America, as research strongly demonstrates, has a much stronger political and educational influence worldwide (Scott, 2006 and Adrian, 2007). Hence, I included the United States in the contextualisation of higher education.

However, although I reviewed higher education in different regions, I was aware that higher education exists in and tends to be strongly influenced by interconnected, interdependent and interrelated socioeconomic and other systems. In other words, higher education is affected by and tends to co-evolve with developments that occur within and outside its environment. The focus on different regions was for analytical purposes.

2.3 Definition and mission of higher education

UNESCO defines higher education as, "All types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities (World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twentieth Century: Vision and Action [WDHE], 1998, p. 1). However, for the purposes of this study, I focus on the meaning of higher education as a state-agent accredited university education that leads to an award of a bachelors or higher degree.

2.4 The value and mission of higher education

Research findings indicate that throughout history, higher education has been generally valued as "central public institutions and bases for critical thought". Universities equip citizens with knowledge and skills that are needed in public and private service and produce new technologies and scientific innovations. Hence, higher education tends to be valued as one of the most effective strategies for public sociocultural and economic development of a country.

Universities, therefore, tend to be viewed as for the public good (Calhoun, 2006, pp. 7 and 10). As a result, there has been a growing demand for higher education and for its diversification (WDHE, 1998, p. 1).

Although over the years the mission of higher education has been shifting in emphasis, its core mission components - such as transferring of knowledge through teaching, training and publication; generating new knowledge through scientific research, engaging society and awarding credentials - have survived generations (Scott, 2006 and WDHE, 1998). Hence, higher education has the power to attract learners and academic staff. The International Association of Universities [IAU] (As cited in Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 19) states that the mission of universities and hence, their inherent power:

> lies in the special power of the attraction that universities exercise on learners, on academic staff and on all the other forms of higher education. Universities…have been among the most privileged places for the advancement of thought and culture…growth of knowledge, particularly the scientific knowledge that has become the dominant force of the modern world.

Thus, a university tends to be a universal phenomenon. It is found in almost all modern national states. The IAU expresses what universities mean both to the youth and society:

> Universities…have been among the most privileged places for the advancement of thought and culture…growth of knowledge, particularly the scientific knowledge that has become the dominant force of the modern world…They are at the frontiers of discovery but guard the heritage of the past… enshrine both hope and nostalgia…linked to ways of life which may be out of date but which, since they are collective stereotypes, continue to appeal to the imagination of the young and to guide many of their choices (IAU, as cited in Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 19).

In the following paragraphs I briefly explore the mission and development of modern universities.

2.5 The development, growth and expansion of higher education

The scope and focus of this study prohibit me from giving a comprehensive review on the development, growth and expansion of higher education. However, some reference to this aspect seems appropriate particularly since there are considerable resonances with the overview of schooling provided earlier. In fact, research findings indicate that in Western Europe and the US, it was Christian churches that were responsible for providing higher education.

2.5.1 Origin and development of higher education in Western Europe

Literature about the development of higher education in the West tends to indicate that it was the Christian churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, that were the first to establish and charter universities in Europe during the Middle Ages (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 27; Scott, 2006, p. 6 and Adrian, 2007, p. 310). In the United States of America (USA), most of the earliest colleges, including Princeton College and Harvard College (now universities) were equally established as religious institutions. The colleges were intended to perpetuate faith and disseminate the doctrines of the founding denominations. The curricula were underpinned by notions of freedom and truth that are founded in God (Adrian, 2007, pp. 310 - 308).

2.5.1.1 Core mission of a university

The first and oldest university, the University of Bologna, is said to have been established in 1088. The development was followed by the establishment of the University of Padua in Italy and of Sorbonne in France. The first modern university however, the Humboldt University in Germany, was established in 1810, and has had large international influence by emphasising research as the mission of a university (Dilger, 2009, p. 524). According to Adrian (2007), the overarching mission of a university was to safeguard the fundamental societal needs, especially through the search for knowledge and truth. Hence, the study of theology, religion, and medieval Latin was viewed as essential for the development of the mind and were offered in all universities (pp. 8 and 308).

2.5.1.2 Changes in core mission of universities

However, in the course of the nineteenth century, the role of the church in offering higher education was taken over by the “bourgeoisie” class. The change is mostly attributed to the Reformation and the resultant decline of the papal political influence in Europe. It is also believed that it was due to the effects of the growth of an urban population and hence the need for more practical skills (Scott, 2006, p. 10). Consequently, all areas of knowledge that were considered to be not directly related to economic development of society, including religion and metaphysics, were eliminated from university curricula in Europe and Latin America (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 27 and Adrian, 2007, pp. 300 - 301).

Thus, the mission of a university shifted to producing human resources so as to meet the economic needs of society. The state assumed a dominant role in providing higher education as part of a development strategy. Universities were to offer training that was necessary for personnel to manage the economy and plan and organise the education system. Hence, "Universities throughout Europe in the course of the fifteenth century tended in the same direction – towards the nationalization of (University of) Paris as of all other universities" (Rashdall, as cited in Scott, 2006, p. 11).

It is pertinent to mention that the German university model and its research mission had had much influence worldwide during the 19th century. Its scholarship in the field of philology, scientific and laboratory research was internationally recognised and admired. England and Japan adopted some elements of the German university system.

In 1999 the European Union (EU) established an agency under the Bologna Accord[1] so as to assure standards among universities in the EU and universities in other countries that sought recognition outside the EU. In addition, according to Adrian, it was the German research ideal combined with the USA model that made the USA a global leader in education in the mid-19th century (Scott, 2006, p. 23 and Adrian, 2007, p. 310).

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1 The main goals of the Accord are
To make European universities more competitive;
To increase transparency;
To increase academic mobility;
To adapt better to the labour market;
To ensure quality and accountability;
To standardise the 3-2-3 degree programme (Bachelor, Masters, and Doctoral).
(Adrian, William, 2007). (Globalisation and the Christian idea of a university (or, the Lexus, the olive tree, and higher education). *Christian Higher Education*, 6, pp. 299-320.)

2.5.2 The development of higher education in the United States of America

Research indicates that in the USA some of the earliest colleges (known as colonial colleges) that developed into universities were established by Christian churches. However, most of the universities were founded by individuals, usually the early founders of the nation. The founders were concerned that the US youth were drawn to European universities because the colonial colleges "had been few, elitist, and poorly equipped" (Scott, 2006, p. 15). It is possible too, that the founders did not want to have close links with Europe for religious reasons.

2.5.2.1 Core mission of higher education in the US

The colleges that the founders established tended to be nondenominational, that is, they were not intended to be mechanisms for evangelization or for guarding particular religious doctrines. Also, the institutions were financially state-supported except for 'for-profit' colleges. The overarching mission of the institutions tended to be democratization in the form of diversity of academic programmes, open access, and equal educational opportunities through a liberal arts curriculum. Later on, however, in the 19th century, universities emphasized technical education in agriculture and industrial sciences. Due to the strong influence of the University of Humboldt in Germany, they also emphasized research (Scott, 2006, p. 15). However, unlike in Europe, universities were not nationalized in the USA and Canada. Not only were the colonial colleges not to be supported by the English government but they also did not have religious ties with Rome (Scott, 2006).

2.5.2.2 Equity and access to higher education

It is important, too, to note that in the USA, according to Scott (2007), there has been a deliberate government effort to make higher education more accessible through its democratization. Government educational policies, like President Johnson's Great Society programmes and President Bill Clinton's Hope scholarship as well as distance learning technologies made it possible for over 20 per cent of all adults 25 years old or older to possess baccalaureate or higher degrees. In this way, the US higher education policies have, since the 1970s, challenged the European and other nations to change from elite to mass higher education (Scott, 2007, p. 19).

The USA developed its own model of a university. It was a multifaceted research university model characterised by growth and expanded enrolment, varied curricula, public and private research funding, modern facilities and resources. It was consumer-driven and responsive to all services in society. It was driven by a search for prestige and political power in society. University presidents (Vice Chancellors) came mostly from the field of law and universities embarked on fund-raising (Altbach, as cited in Adrian, 2006, p. 302). It imposes academic standards that in effect tend to widen the gap between central and peripheral universities (Schultheis, 2005; Scott, 2006 and Adrian, 2007). Thus, a USA university is nicknamed a "Multiversity" (Scott, 2006, p. 3). As a result, the USA model of university has been reproduced in many countries' higher education management practices. In other words, the USA tends to influence academic practices in higher education in many regions, including Africa.

2.5.3 The development of higher education in South America

Spain established universities in the colonies which it controlled from the 16th century in Latin America. On the other hand, Portugal never allowed a university to be established in Brazil, a country that it had colonised. Thus, the first university in Brazil, University of Rio de Janeiro, was established in 1920 after Brazil had become independent of Portuguese rule. Other Latin American states followed suit. They established universities after independence from European colonialism, a phenomenon that also occurred in Africa (Assie-Lumumba, 2006 and Scott, 2006, p. 12).

2.5.4 The development of higher education in Africa

According to Assie-Lumumba (2006), higher education in Africa flourished before or at the same time that it flourished in Europe. The University of Al-Azhar in Egypt, established in 970 AD, is considered to be the oldest continually operating institution in the world. However, higher education in Africa was neither expanded nor consolidated as was the case in Europe and the US (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, pp. 25 - 29).

2.5.5 The introduction and development of Western higher education in Africa

The European education system including higher education was introduced in Africa mostly by Christian church missionaries from Europe (Schultheis, 2005, p. 101 and Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Most of the higher education institutions started as colleges and later developed or evolved into universities. Examples include the Gordon Memorial College in Sudan, Makerere Government College in Uganda and the Yaba Higher College in Nigeria (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 33); the Royal technical College in Kenya (Oketch, 2003, p. 120) and the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Zimbabwe (Wills, 1973, p. 329). The trend has been the same in Malawi, as the study will show. Later in 1939, the British Governors of West African colonies agreed to create a West African University at Achimota in Ghana (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 33).

It has been observed that the British introduced higher education much earlier than the French and other European powers. The French, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian government policies did not include the provision of higher education in their colonies in Africa. The governments tended to believe that Africans who received higher education would use it against the privileges of the European settlers (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 33). Nevertheless, the French government allowed the people from their colonies in Africa to go and study in France. On the other hand, the Belgians left the provision of education to the Catholic Church (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, pp. 32, 34 - 37).

In South Africa, although a higher education institution was established in the 19th century with the opening of the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1873 (later, it was renamed University of South Africa), higher education was provided along racial and ethnic lines. The practice was in accordance to the legal frameworks of racial and ethnic discrimination of the 1950s. Thus, the development of higher education in South Africa tended to be slow during the colonial period. However, several colleges that affiliated with the university evolved into autonomous universities. The University of South Africa is considered to be one of the oldest and most advanced universities offering distance education through the utilization of modern ICTs (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 39).

2.5.6 Post-colonial development of higher education in Africa

In Africa, the proliferation of higher education is a post-colonial phenomenon of the early 1960s. It is believed that this was mostly due to the fact that before independence many African countries relied on foreign personnel. After independence there was a need for qualified and trained personnel to manage the economy and organise education systems. Therefore, most of the independent African countries emphasised the development of higher education. It tended to be seen as “an avoidable instrument for national social-economic development” (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 43). In Malawi, for example, the first university was established in 1965, a year after the country became independent (Chimombo, 2003, p. 414).

Thus, it has been observed that whereas there were 52 universities in 18 of the 48 African states by 1960, there were 316 universities by 2000. 43 percent of the countries had only one or two universities (Schultheis, 2005, p. 100). It may be argued that the increase in the number of universities is evidence of the importance of the role that the institution plays in society. However, research indicates that higher education worldwide faces huge challenges. In the following section, I briefly discuss some of the critical challenges.

2.6 Current challenges in higher education

According to Welsh & Dehler (2007), the challenges are varied but inter-related and interconnected. They tend to be associated with various factors including socio-political changes, the effects of globalisation on economic thought and practices, financing and funding, equity and access, relevance of curricula, quality of academic programmes and research and services (WDHE, 1998 and Welsh & Dehler, 2007). The challenges are embedded in specific sociocultural contexts in which higher education institutions exist.

Research indicates that higher education in Africa is strongly associated with Western European and USA influences and practices (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Therefore, an understanding of the challenges in Western Europe and the US higher education is pertinent to this study. First, I summarise the challenges that higher education in Western Europe and in the US (the West) faces. Next, I briefly describe the challenges that higher education in Africa faces in general and in Malawi in particular.

2.6.1 Low public funding

One of the major challenges that higher education faces in the West is financing and funding of higher education. The challenge is largely attributed to changes in economic ideologies. Previously, the public sector played the dominant role in providing higher education. This tended to be the case because higher education was viewed as a mechanism of government for producing qualified personnel to manage the economy and manage the education system in a national development strategy. Higher education was viewed as a public good. Therefore it was granted maximum government financial support that accrued from public tax (Scott, 2007 and Welsh & Dehler, 2007). However, the view that higher education is a public good has been challenged by neo-liberal economic ideologies (Scott, 2007).

Thus, in the United States, for example, higher education has been subjected to market forces in that severe budget cuts became politically acceptable. Higher education state funding decreased from 55 per cent in the 1990s to less than 25 per cent in 2005 (Nutt, as cited in Welsh & Dehler, 2007, p. 410). As Dillon observed:

> Taxpayer support for public universities ... has plunged more precipitously since 2001 than at any time in the past two decades ... reflecting a de facto privatization of the institutions that played a crucial role in the creation of the American middle class (Cited in Welsh & Dehler, 2007, p. 409).

Governments worldwide, however, have kept on reducing subsidies (subventions) to public universities and have shifted the cost of operating universities to users of the services (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008 and Maginson & Rhoades, 2002). In turn, universities have inevitably increased their reliance on “cheaper part-time, adjunct and contract faculty”, cost sharing and outsourcing non-core services of higher education so as to be financially self-supporting (Welsh & Dehler, 2007, p. 410). In effect, it is the privatisation[2] of public higher education. In China,

[2] Privatisation means the application of market principles in the operation of public higher education by withdrawing funding or subsidies on student support services and living expenses. In turn, there is cost sharing of operation cost through loan/scholarship schemes; provision of education vouchers to permit parents to choose schools and

for example, where higher education is a monopoly of the state, government has introduced privatization too (Cheng, 2009, p. 53).

Consequently, according to Clegg et al. (2003, p. 49), universities have come to view learners as customers. Therefore, most universities tend not have fixed patterns of engagement with learners. Instead, they design flexible times for instruction such as part-time, day-release, block-release and weekend-release programmes so as to meet the needs of the ‘customers’. In addition, it has been observed that globalisation tends to replace the historic role of a university in searching for knowledge and truth so as to serve the needs of society with carrying out research as a source of revenue. That is, research and consultancy services tend to be more important as sources of income rather than carrying out research for the sake of generating knowledge and truth regardless of the financial outcome. Furthermore, most of the higher education institutions offer diverse learning programmes and intensive short courses to generate funds.

The challenge also affects leadership and management practices. In most universities, collegial approaches and professional bureaucratic structures tend to be ignored in favour of managerialist[3] approaches that favour entrepreneurial management practices (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2010). I discuss managerialism as a challenge below.

2.6.2 Managerialist approaches

To enable institutions to adapt to the demands that arise in their environment including accountability, most managers of public universities have abandoned the collegial management approach with its emphasis on self-government. Instead, they tend to favour managerialist approaches characterised by top-down decision-making processes, accountability and entrepreneurship in attempts to make an institution financially sustainable. Hence, there is a

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universities for their children based on the payment that is provided by the state (see reference on Varghese, NV (2006, pp. 19 – 20).

[3] Managerialism refers to a management approach characterised by top down decision-making, entrepreneurialism toward the market and customers (learners), and an atomistic and mechanistic view of understanding knowledge and learning organisation (Clegg, Hudson &Steel, 2003).

growing tendency among public universities to act like private institutions (Clegg, Hudson & Steel, 2003; Adrian, 2007 and Comm & Mathaisel, 2007).

In Australia one of the factors that have led to the reformation of governance in public higher education has been the loss of public trust in universities' ability to self-govern. Taxpayers often accuse public higher education of financial mismanagement. Thus, government urges public universities to adapt to challenges in the external environment (Harman & Treadgold, 2007, p. 14) thereby attaching conditions to public funds normally appropriated to universities. In other words, the relationship between government and public higher education as an institution "has changed from one of benevolent provider to an investor who expects to realize benefits on its investment" (Etzkowitz, as quoted in Harman & Treadgold, 2007, p. 16). That is to say, governments tend to expect specific outcomes from universities rather than leave universities alone to do what they like.

Not only is managerialism contributing to the decline in the development of higher education in many countries in the West but it is also meeting public resistance due to escalating fees. In addition, the practice has led to a decline in the numbers of learners in universities (Varghese, 2006 and Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008). As a result, it tends to bring about the need for public universities to compete for learners.

2.6.3 Competing for learners

Because of reduced public funding, public universities, like private universities, are becoming more dependent on fees from learners. Therefore they compete for learners so as to generate income to meet operating costs (Comm & Mathaisel, 2007). To attract learners universities try to provide safe and up-to-date residence halls, state-of-the-art facilities and the latest information and communication technologies. As a result, universities charge more.

One of the latent effects of this practice is that some of the learners from certain social classes find higher education more inaccessible and inequitable. The same practice, on the other hand, makes learners and parents demand more return for their financial investment in education. They demand better services, facilities and results (Comm & Mathaisel, 2007, pp. 134 – 135).

The practice has also increased cross-border movement. Learners move from one region to another in search of financially affordable higher education whereas academic staffs tend to search for better working conditions and remuneration.

In some cases, universities have taken education to where most learners are more likely to be found in the form of extension campuses, learning through distance and electronic learning. In other words, there is intense competition for learners among universities (Mayumi, 2009). The two practices form part of another kind of challenge to public higher education: globalisation.

2.6.4 Globalisation[4]

According to Clegg, Hudson & Steel (2003, p. 42), globalisation is a phenomenon that tends to be characterised by rapid technical innovation, expansion and organisation of economic activities across political boundaries of nation states, decline of nation states as centres of power, worldwide flow of services, technology and information using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) like the Internet, television, radio and telephone (Nayyar, 2006, p. 137).

Globalisation has resulted in shifting the traditional mission of a university from concern with developing the mind and safeguarding societal needs to concern with the sciences, engineering, business, prestige and prosperity. Therefore, higher education tends to be driven by market forces (training for jobs, researching for industries, etc.) rather than the development of the mind (Adrian, 2007, p. 392).

Also, globalisation has resulted in mass higher education at the expense of quality (Kivinen, Hedman & Kaipainen, 2007). Thus, according to Scott (2007), knowledge, not capital, land or labour has become an issue of great concern in modern universities in North America, Europe and Japan (p. 31). The Bologna Accord of 1994 sought to address the challenge about quality.
Another issue of great concern that higher education faces, however, is environmental sustainability. Universities face a challenge of playing a leading role in environmental

[4] Nayyar (2006, p. 137) defines globalisation as a process associated with increasing economic openness, growing economic interdependence and deepening economic integration in the world economy.

sustainability issues in what is called Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (Wright, 2002).

2.6.5 Environmental sustainability issues

Universities are pressed to play leading roles in dealing with issues of environmental sustainability. Institutions are urged to demonstrate concerns for the environment both in the ways in which institutions are governed and managed and in incorporating environmental issues in curriculum development and implementation processes (Wright, 2002). The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) demands a university head to provide leadership and support in mobilizing resources so that an institution can respond to environmental challenges (UNESCO, 1990).

UNESCO has made a number of declarations since the 1972 Stockholm Declaration for universities to adopt (UNESCO, 1990 as cited in Wright, 2002, p. 205). Hence, one of the criteria in the worldwide ranking of universities focuses on sustainability of a university in reference to the approaches that it takes in dealing with environmental issues. The challenge is further evidenced by the publication of a journal that specifically deals with the issues of sustainability in higher education (Weenen, 2000; Wright, 2002; Axlesson & Sonesson, 2008 and Everett, 2008).

2.6.6 Summary

In short, it can be said that among the challenges that public higher education in Western Europe face the critical ones include:

- low government funding;
- a managerialist approach to leadership and management behaviour;
- intense competition for learners;
- globalisation;
- and the challenge of incorporating environmental sustainability issues in university curricula and management practices.

In Africa, the context tends to generate challenges that are similar to, as well as different from those in Western Europe.

2.7 Major challenges facing higher education in Africa

In addition to the challenges that I outlined above in connection with higher education in the West, there are other challenges that tend to be peculiar to Africa. In the following paragraphs, I summarise some of the critical challenges that public higher education faces in Africa.

2.7.1 Failure to meet demand for access to higher education

It has been observed that one of the major challenges that public universities face in Africa is failure to meet the demand for access to higher education. In other words, there are far fewer spaces available in higher education than there are people who need and want higher education. University enrolment in Africa is the lowest in the world (Varghese, 2006, p. 29). Failure to meet this demand is attributed to complex issues.

The first is inadequate funding of and financing policies on higher education by the international development partners. The neo-liberal ideologies that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund tend to advocate exert pressure on African governments to privatise public universities (Teferra & Altbach, 2004 and Assie-Lumumba, 2006). As a result, due to high poverty levels, most of the learners are unable to afford university fees.

Second, it is reported that the World Bank and other international donor agencies "encouraged African governments' relative neglect of higher education" (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006, p. 4). The two institutions tended to view basic education as more important for poverty alleviation than higher education. As a result, they urged African governments to invest more in basic education as an effective strategy for socio-economic development (Assie-Lumumba, 2006, p. 12 and Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006, p. 3). For instance, the World Bank in 1991 advised the Kenyan government to limit national enrolment in higher education to 3 per cent per annum for 26 years up to 2017 in favour of increasing enrolment in basic education (Varghese, 2006, p. 30 – 31). Therefore, the current understanding that there is a high correlation between access to quality higher education and socio-economic growth and development of a country has resulted in a sudden high demand for access to higher education (WDHE, 1998; Assie-Lumumba, 2006; Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006 and Varghese, 2006).

Furthermore, the failure to meet the demand for higher education is said to be due to the impact of the rapid increase in population growth (Assie-Lumumba, 2006 and Schultheis, 2006). Higher education institutions fail to expand to meet the demand. As a result, access to higher education is a challenge.

Also, most of the African governments did not have legal frameworks for the operation of private higher education until the 1990s. Therefore, in spite of the increase in population growth and the expansion of secondary education, higher education remained a monopoly of the state (Schultheis, 2005 and Varghese, 2006). The monopoly tends to be facilitated through politicisation of higher education governance.

2.7.2 Politicisation of governance of public higher education

Bloom, Canning & Chan (2006) cite politicisation of governance as one of the challenges that higher education faces in Africa. Although some governments allow universities to manage their operation, most of the government policies put many restrictions on the autonomy, control appointments of top managers and limit academic freedom (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). In turn, the policies tend to constrain institutions' responsiveness to change in their environments (WDHE, 1998 and Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006, p. 6).

In addition, other related issues such as armed conflicts, poor funding and financing of university programmes, poor conditions of service and remuneration have often led to resistance in the form of protracted boycotts and violent strikes either by staff or by learners or by both (Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

As a result of challenges in governance practices and other conditions, some of the professionals in Africa migrate to other countries outside the continent in search of better working conditions and facilities. The migration tends to reduce availability of appropriately qualified personnel in universities (Teferra & Altbach, 2004 and Assie-Lumumba, 2006). The migration and compounded deaths due to the HIV and AIDS scourge tends to aggravate the seriousness of the challenge (Assie-Lumumba, 2006 and Brown, 2008, p. 283).

Furthermore, Teferra & Altbach (2006, p. 30) observe that in most of the higher education institutions in Africa, there are more non-academic and administrative staff than there are teaching and research staff. This has implications for scholarship, research, quality and the availability of academic programmes in universities in Africa.

2.7.3 Low research output and quality of academic programme

The third challenge that higher education faces in Africa is lower quality of the academic programmes, research and scholarship than are found in institutions in developing regions. On the other hand, it has been observed that in most cases, universities in Africa do not offer academic programmes that are diverse and relevant to the needs of the countries in which the institutions are situated (Teferra & Altbach, 2004 and Assie-Lumumba, 2006).

These challenges are often associated with a lack of or inadequate funding which in turn leads to a lack of or inadequate requisite physical facilities and infrastructure and unavailability or inadequacy of equipment, facilities and qualified personnel that are necessary to support quality education, research and scholarship (WDHE, 1998; Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Assie-Lumumba, 2006; Welch 2007; Hernes & Martin, 2008; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009 and World Conference on Higher Education, 2009). In other words, higher education in Africa tends to fail to fulfill its core mission: construct and disseminate knowledge, train personnel and carry out high quality scholarly research.

2.7.4 Globalisation

Finally, globalisation. Although some researchers have argued that globalisation is not a new phenomenon, almost all researchers tend to agree that there is new demand on universities worldwide to shift the emphasis of their academic programmes from humanities to science and technology (Nayyar, 2006 and Adrian, 2007). It is strongly argued that the socioeconomic development of a country has been observed to be closely associated with growth of knowledge that relies heavily on utilizing information and communication technologies and sciences (natural).

This argument motivates universities to diversify academic programmes and modes of provision of teaching and learning making it necessary for universities to develop curricula that are relevant to current needs, able to produce highly trained personnel and carry out scientific research so as to generate new knowledge in various fields. However, the challenges that I have outlined above tend to constrain the capacity of public higher education from effectively dealing with challenges that are posed by globalisation.

2.7.5 Summary

In general, public higher education faces serious and diverse challenges in Africa. The challenges include:

- governance;
- demand for access and equity;
- low funding;
- lack of alternative sources of income;
- lower research output and scholarship;
- lack of diverse and relevant curricula to meet national needs;
- inadequate academic and non-academic personnel;
- the lack of requisite infrastructure, facilities and resources including ICT to support teaching and learning functions and research; and
- effects of globalisation.

Some of the challenges such as the demand for access and equity in public higher education have given rise to the need for an alternative to public higher education, namely, private higher education. As I demonstrate however, private higher education in Africa faces serious and diverse challenges of its own. While some of the challenges tend to be similar to the challenges that public higher education faces, most of the challenges are unique. In the following sections I explore the motives for the provision, growth and development of private higher education which is the focus of this study. I summarise some of the major challenges that it faces.

2.8 Private higher education

Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009, p. 79) describe a private institution of higher education as a university or any other type of tertiary education other than government-owned or a publicly-funded institution that offers higher education. Altbach et al. (2009) and Bjarnason (2009, p. 1) observe that a private institution of higher education may be owned or sponsored by an individual, a foundation, a religious organization or cultural group, whether it is for-profit or a not-for-profit in its orientation (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009, p. 83). Researchers note that proprietors offer private higher education for different purposes. I summarise some of the purposes in Section 2.8.1 below.

2.8.1 Purposes for offering private higher education

Research findings indicate that private higher education may be offered to satisfy the need for access and equity. This is often particularly the case in places where some sectors of the society feel discriminated against in accessing public universities (Bjarnason, 2009). It may also be to promote and maintain religious or ethnic beliefs and values. In some cases, private higher education may be offered to satisfy the need for greater diversification of curricula, academic programmes and instructional approaches. In some cases, it is offered for sale as a commodity for trade (Thaver, 2004; Welch, 2007; Bjarnason, 2009; Lemaitre, 2009 and Levy, 2009).

In Malawi four of the private institutions of higher education are sponsored by religious organisations. There is evidence that some of the purposes for offering private higher education are to maintain and promote the religious beliefs and values of the sponsoring organisation, offer alternative curricula and instructional approaches to public higher education and to achieve political redress (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.1.3).

Private institutions of higher education however, are of several types. The types often tend to reflect the purpose for the establishment of the institution. I summarise the types in the following section.

2.8.2 Types of private higher education

Levy (2009) observes that there are several types of PHE. The types range from elite, semi-elite, religious and cultural to non-elite and demand-absorbing[5] types. He describes the elite type by noting that it is mostly associated with "privileged clientele" and "a privileged student body", and that it tends to be "mostly public", whereas the semi-elite institutions tend to have "more of a private presence" (pp. 14-16). They tend to be among the leading private institutions of higher education, and may compete fairly with good public universities in their countries. They are mostly characterised by good practical teaching, concentration on a particular field - often the business field, are "job-oriented" and are often motivated by commercial reasons (Levy, 2009, pp. 16 - 18). The religious and cultural institution type on the other hand, is identified by its being based on religious beliefs and by being more clearly motivated by non-profit intentions.

The non-elite and demand-absorbing types are often characterised by being job-oriented, customer-specific (often targeting non-traditional student groups including working adults) and by their rapid response to emergent academic needs. Such institutions tend to be numerically dominant in the PHE field. They may identify themselves as colleges. As Levy (2009, p. 18) points out, in countries where the use of the name "university" is not restricted, some private higher education providers may call themselves universities. In order to avoid such ambiguities in this study, I applied the name university to refer only to an institution of higher education which is accredited by a state authority.

2.9 Growth and expansion of private higher education

Research findings indicate that private higher education is growing rapidly in many regions worldwide including Africa (Levy, 2009). Only Bhutan, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Greece did not have state-accredited private higher education institutions by the time Levy (2009) compiled his report.

[5] See Levy, Daniel C (2009). *Growth and typology*. In Bjarnason, Svava; Cheng, Kai-Ming; Fielden, John; Lemaitre, Maria-Jose; Levy, Daniel C and Varghese, NV (Contributors), A new dynamic in private higher education. UNESCO, World Conference on Higher Education, 2009.

It is estimated that about 30 per cent of the higher education enrolment worldwide is in private higher education. For example, in some of the East Asian countries like Japan and Indonesia, over 70 percent of higher education enrolment is in PHE. In Indonesia alone, it is estimated that over 98 percent of all higher education institutions are private (Levy, 2009, pp. 7 - 8). However, in China, a private institution of higher education was only formally recognised in 2006 (Cheng, 2009, p. 52).

Furthermore, in Latin America, enrolment in PHE is estimated to be over 40 percent whereas in Hungary and the US, it is estimated to be over 60 percent. In countries like the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands, private higher education is subject to strict control so as to assure quality (Levy, 2009).

2.9.1 Growth and development of private higher education in Africa

In Africa, research into the development of private higher education, according to Levy (2009) is "less reliable, scarcer and more scattered" (p. 13). I pointed out that one of the major challenges that higher education tends to face in Africa is the relatively lower research output and quality (refer to Section 2.6.3 above).

Nevertheless, available information suggests that whereas previously the development of private higher education had been slow in Africa, it has been rapidly growing since the 1980s (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Varghese, 2006 and Levy, 2009). For instance, while in 1960 there were seven private higher education institutions in forty-eight countries, the number had increased to eighty-four by 2002 (Levy, 2009). In Uganda, over 85 percent of higher education institutions are private (Schultheis, 2005). In Malawi, private higher education appeared nine years before government reviewed the University Education Act in order to provide a legal framework for private higher education (Malawi.PRSP, 2002, p. 35). Thus, some researchers have observed that private higher education in Africa was growing rapidly and tended to be less controlled.

The emergence of private higher education in Africa appears to have been prompted mostly by the failure of public higher education to satisfy the demand for access and equity and by neo-liberal economic policies (Varghese, 2006). However, unlike public higher education, private higher education faces more serious and diverse challenges in Africa (Oketch, 2004; Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Thaver, 2004; Varghese, 2006 and Morley, Leach & Lugg, 2009).

2.10 Challenges in the development of private higher education in Africa

Scholars argue about the capacity of private institutions of higher education to provide better quality higher education than public institutions. The issues centre on the motives for offering private higher education, quality assurance and the ability and willingness of the sponsoring agency to invest adequate funds to meet operating costs. In Section 2.7.1, I outlined some of the major purposes that proprietors of private higher education have. In the sections that follow, I briefly discuss the challenges that private institutions of higher education face. However, the scope of the study suggests I focus the discussion on private higher education in Africa. Later I focus on challenges that private higher education in Malawi tends to face.

2.10.1 Relationship between government and private higher education

In Africa, challenges in the development of PHE include the relationship between PHE and national governments. It has been observed that most of the private institutions tend to locate themselves close to one another, often in urban centres, in an attempt to attract more learners. In some cases it has been found that some of them tend not to comply with government policies on equity. For instance, some of the private institutions of higher education limit access to members of a particular faith or ethnic group or gender (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009).

In South Africa, on the other hand, private higher education tends to be viewed with suspicion. It tends to be seen as an attempt to weaken the education system (Varghese, 2006). The argument may be more motivated by greed than scholarship whereby the critics desire to perpetuate the exclusion of the previously under-represented or excluded groups (Calhoun, 2006, p. 9). In Egypt, only an Egyptian citizen can be appointed as a Vice Chancellor of a private institution of higher education. Furthermore, academic programmes that are offered "should not duplicate specialities in other universities where there are surpluses of graduates" (Fielden & Varghese, 2009, p. 73). These practices have tended to constrain development and growth of private higher education in these countries and frustrate interests of potential providers.

2.10.2 Lack of diversity and relevance of academic programmes

On the other hand, some research findings indicate that most of the private institutions of higher education offer only academic programmes in certain fields, usually in business studies and the arts, programmes that do not require huge investments to implement them, like the sciences, engineering and medicine. Furthermore, some researchers have observed that in most cases, there is a lack of relevance and diversity in the academic programmes in relation to national goals of education and demand. Additionally, studies indicate that in most of the PIHEs, the number of academics and non-academics are inadequate and that in some most of the staff tend to be under-qualified to teach in higher education institutions (Welch, 2007; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009; Bjarnason, 2009; Fielden & Cheng, 2009 and Levy, 2009).

2.10.3 Dependence on fees for funding operations

Some researchers have argued that private institutions of higher education rely on fees as a source of funds to finance the operations and the development of the institutions. In other words, they lack diverse sources of funding to enable them to finance new development projects, improvement of the student support services, or requisite facilities and infrastructure to support research and effective teaching and learning functions (Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Oketch, 2004; Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Thaver, 2004; Varghese, 2006; Welch, 2007; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009; Bjarnason, 2009; Fielden & Cheng, 2009 and Levy, 2009).

2.10.4 Lack of adequate academic staff

Some researchers have observed that most of the PIHEs tend to offer lower quality education and student support services in comparison with the higher fees they levy. In most cases, private higher institutions rely on part-time teachers. Often the teachers come from public higher institutions and industry. The practice tends to be particularly true of the demand-absorbing institutions (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006 and Varghese, 2006). As a result, some people hold a low evaluation of private higher education viewing it as inferior to public higher education (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006; Varghese, 2006; Welch, 2007 and

Levy, 2009). However, some researchers have observed that the challenges that private institutions of higher education face are exceptions.

2.10.5 Counter argument for private higher education

It has been argued that some of the challenges that private institutions of higher education face also exist in public institutions of higher education. I have outlined them above. Also, in some cases, most prestigious institutions of higher education are found in the private sector. It has further been argued that it is partly the failure of public institutions of higher education to meet the demand for access, equity and diversification of academic programmes that has given rise to proliferation of private higher education (Bjarnason et al., 2008 and Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006).

2.11 The development of higher education in Malawi

The first university in Malawi, the University of Malawi, was established in 1965 and ninety learners reported for the first classes on September 29th. Enrolment increased to 7, 972 by 2008 (EMIS, 2008, p. 17). Prior to the establishment of the University of Malawi (UNIMA), the British colonial government had upgraded the University College of Salisbury (now Harare) in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) into a multiracial University College of Rhodesia[6] and Nyasaland (now Malawi) in 1955. This was an attempt to meet the need for higher education in the three countries (Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) (Lulat, 2003, p. 19). UNIMA had been the only public institution of higher education in Malawi for thirty-two years.

A second public university, Mzuzu University, was established in 1997 in the northern region of Malawi. It registered its first learners in 1998. When it opened for a new academic year in 1999, it had admitted 346 learners. Both UNIMA and the Mzuzu University (MZUNI) serve a national

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[6] Rhodesia in this case included the Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. The three countries, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, now Malawi, since its independence from the British colonial rule in 1964, formed what was called the Central African Federation. The federation dissolved on December 31, 1963 after Nyasaland seceded. See, Wills, AJ (1973). *An introduction to the history of Central, 3rd Ed.* London: Oxford University Press, pp. 326-359).

population of about thirteen million people. In 2008, a combined total enrolment in the two institutions was 8,168 (PIF, 2001; Chimombo, 2003 and EMIS, 2008).

Higher education tends to be considered to be an important component of the education system because of the role it plays in creating and advancing new knowledge through teaching and research and for producing people who are critical to the socio-economic development of the country (The Education System in Malawi, 2010, p. 64). For this project, however, I mainly discuss the challenges that the University of Malawi faces. UNIMA has a more dominant position in the field of higher education in Malawi (Chimombo, 2003, p. 414).

2.11.1 Challenges in the public higher education in Malawi

UNIMA faces challenges in the provision of higher education in Malawi. The challenges mostly concern funding, access, equity, infrastructure, quality and relevance of the curricula and academic programmes, personnel and management and governance (PIF, 2001 and UNIMA Strategic Plan, 2005, pp. 11 – 14). In brief, the challenges include the following.

2.11.1.1 Access to higher education

One of the challenges concerns access. As I indicated, when UNIMA opened in 1965 it enrolled ninety learners. At the time, the national population in Malawi was estimated to be four million. However, over forty years on in 2007 when the population was over twelve million, UNIMA had a total enrolment of 6,720 learners out of a gross total of 30,510 eligible learners who had passed the Malawi School Certificate of Education[7] (MSCE) in 2006 (EMIS, 2008, p. 121). Access to higher education in Malawi is estimated to be at 0.3 per cent. In 2007, of 6,720 learners, 2,199 were female learners, comprising about 33 per cent of the total enrolment. By 2012, there were 7,371 learners (Malawi.PRSP, 2002, p. 49; Chimombo, 2003, p. 415; Lulat, 2003, p. 28; UNIMA Strategic Plan, 2005, p. 3 and EMIS, 2008, p. 121).

[7] Malawi School Certificate of Education is an equivalent of Ordinary Level of International General School Certificate of Education (IGSCE).

Thus, access to higher education is the lowest in the world. It is estimated that only one percent of eligible learners access higher education. The challenge is often attributed to a shortage of space and modalities for admission, lack of investment in new infrastructure and the rehabilitation of old infrastructure. As a result, the institution tends to be constrained from introducing new academic programmes (MoEST, 2008, p. 23 and Education System in Malawi (ESM), 2010).

2.11.1.2 Equity in accessing higher education

Research indicates that in addition to failing to meet the demand for access, UNIMA faces the challenge of equity. It has been observed that only about 30 percent of females gain access to higher education. In addition, of the learners who gain admission to higher education ninety percent come from the wealthiest quintile and regular learners are heavily subsidized while the non-residents are not (ESM, 2010).

2.11.1.3 Financing higher education

Research findings indicate that UNIMA depends on government subventions. Some factors tend to influence the university to keep on depending on this kind of support. The institution fails to reduce costs and generate alternative sources of revenue (IMF and IDA, 2003, p. 5). Furthermore, expenditure goes on personal emoluments, administration and student services at the expense of core teaching areas and learning materials (ESM, 2010). In addition, some researchers have observed that the teacher to student ratio is one to ten but drops to one to two in the college of medicine. This is the lowest in Sub-Sahara Africa according to Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA, 2009, no page). Furthermore, UNIMA does not have a legal framework for recovering the loans that learners obtain to support their education. As a result, most of the learners do not repay the loan even if they are employed (ESM, 2010).

2.11.1.4 Inadequate appropriately qualified personnel

UNIMA has inadequate appropriately qualified personnel. For example, only twenty percent of the teaching staff hold a PhD or equivalent qualification (MoEST, 2008, p. 24 and SARUA, 2009, no page). It was further observed that in 2007 of the 442 teaching staff 106 had doctoral degrees, 206 had Master's, and 70 had other qualifications (EMIS 2008, p. 121).

The challenge is associated with poor working conditions, remuneration and governance among other factors. In addition, the challenge is also associated with the negative impact of HIV and AIDS and migration of staff in search of better paid jobs. It is estimated that the teacher attrition rate was about six percent (PIF, 2001; UNIMA Strategic Plan 2005, pp. 11-14; MoEST, 2008, p. 24; SARUA, 2009, no page and ESM, 2010). Poor remuneration and working conditions have often led to strikes by both the academic and non-academic staff. For instance, at the time I was doing this research, academic and non-academic staff at Chancellor College, the Polytechnic and the College of Medicine, three of the constituent colleges of UNIMA, was on strike over pay and allowances (Cross, 2012).

2.11.1.5 Governance of higher education

MoEST (2008, p. 24) cites governance as one of the challenges. It states that there "are poorly defined governance structures, lines of authority and delegation of powers" including creation of posts, appointment of staff, tenure and mechanisms for monitoring productivity. Poor definition of governance structures makes the institution vulnerable to political interference in management practices. For instance, academic staffs at Chancellor College, one of the constituent colleges of UNIMA, were in conflict with the Malawi government over the meaning and interpretation of academic freedom. This conflict led to a strike that lasted over seven months by the academic staff of the institution (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 8 April, 2011 and Namangale, 2011).

2.11.2 Government response to the challenges

Thus, while it may be argued that higher education faces huge challenges worldwide, issues of access, equity, diversity of academic programmes including science and technology, these are of concern to government and other stakeholders. Therefore, the Malawi government has reviewed the higher education policy on financing, access, equity and the management. For example, government decided to increase enrolment from 3,500 to 12,000 by 2012; enable 15 percent of the student population access to higher education through distance learning; increase female enrolment from 28 percent to 50 percent; have private institutions absorb 15 percent of the university enrolment by 2012 and build six additional universities by the year 2015 (Malawi.PRSP), 2002; MoEST, 2008; NRM, 2008; Khanje, 2009 and ESM, 2010). It is in this context that the Christian churches and other agencies have been invited to participate in providing higher education (MoEST, 2008 and ESM, 2010).

2.12 The emergence and development of private higher education in Malawi

The first private institution of higher education in Malawi first emerged in August 1994. It was in this year that the Share World Open University was established in Blantyre as a distance PHE centre. Soon after the establishment, it opened centres for study in the major cities in the country. Later, in 2003, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Livingstonia Synod, established the University of Livingstonia in the Northern Region of Malawi. The Seventh-day Adventist Church followed a year later, and established the Malawi Adventist University in the Central Region of Malawi in 2004. The Catholic Church established the Catholic University of Malawi in the Southern Region of Malawi in 2004 although it officially started registering learners in 2006. Except for the Share World Open University, all the institutions are situated in rural areas and offer in-contact tuition. They are faith-based and sponsored by the stated Christian church denominations. By 2012, there were more seven state-accredited private institutions of higher education in Malawi.

2.13 Roles played by private institutions of higher education in Malawi

The emergence of private higher education in Malawi signals a radical transformation in the development and provision of higher education. It is one of the alternative strategies for dealing with challenges concerning access, equity, diversity and relevance in higher education (MoEST, 2008 and Malawi.PRSP, 2002). I argued in Chapter One, Section 1.1 that private institutions of higher education in Malawi made higher education more accessible, more especially to under-privileged school-leavers who fail to obtain admission into the public universities. In addition, the private institutions enable working adults upgrade themselves and obtain higher qualification. Furthermore, the institutions offer alternative curricula and instructional approaches. Besides that, they make a significant contribution to the socioeconomic development of the members of the local and community at large by offering job opportunities, markets and other social services.

However, I also pointed out above that research into higher education shows that PHE faces many and diverse challenges worldwide (WDHE1998; Teferra & Altbach, 2003 and 2004; Oketch, 2004; Thaver 2004; Assie-Lumumba, 2006; Bjarnason, 2009 and Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 2) made a pertinent observation when they said, “If the first challenge of change is to ensure that it is desirable, and the second challenge is to make it doable, then the biggest challenge of all is to make it durable and sustainable”. Thus, there is a need to explore ways to make PHE more sustainable.

2.14 Summary

It has been observed that there is a close association between higher education and the socio-economic development of a country. Therefore, governments until recently have been financing higher education as a public good. However, due to neo-liberal economic policies and other factors, governments have been reducing funds to public higher education. Hence, public higher education faces various challenges. In Africa, some of the challenges include governance, globalisation and failure to satisfy the demand for access and equity. One of the responses to the challenges has been liberalising the provision of higher education through privatisation.

However, private higher education faces challenges too. Most of the challenges relate to lack of diverse sources of funds, appropriately qualified academic and non-academic personnel, requisite infrastructure, facilities and resources to support teaching and learning functions and limited academic programmes.

It is significant to note that research findings in PHE describe the challenges but rarely present in-depth accounts of institutional or national circumstances and the underlying causes of the challenges. Clark, MacIntyre & Cruickshank (2007) made the following pertinent observation:

> Yet, programmes are grounded in well-established pre-existing organizational, social and cultural contexts. Organizational contexts are likely to affect the content/perception of and reactions to programmes (p. 518).

Thus, there is need to understand the causes of the challenges within the context in which the institutions exist so as to explore ways that may enable private higher education to be more sustainable. This was one of the goals that I set out to achieve in this study.

Chapter Three

Theoretical framework

> *Researchers have studied organizations as though they were mechanistic systems with straightforward cause-and-effect linkages and dynamics that could be predicted from historical data…. Many now believe that … organizations are complex adaptive systems in which relationships are critical, are generally nonlinear, and lead to unpredictable dynamics* (Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005, p. 670).

3.1 Introduction

Interest in carrying out a study to understand the nature and underlying causes of challenges in private higher education made me anxious. I wondered what I needed to look for in a research site. I questioned my understanding of an organisation and what it is that makes an organisation to be what it is. I needed a formal theoretical framework that, in a manner of speaking, 'freeze' organisational practices to enable me to make sense of what goes on in an organisation.

Fleetwood (2004) asserts that it is impossible to study social practices without using conceptual resources. He said:

> There is no theory-neutral observation, description, interpretation, theorization, explanation, or whatever. There is, in other words, no unmediated access to the world: access is always mediated (p. 30).

Two of the formal theories about organisations discussed by Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel (2005, p. 670) are mechanistic, orderly systems and organic, adaptive systems. I have learned from my work experience that practices and events in organisations rarely occur as formally planned. Consequently, I find mechanistic theory less appealing.

3.2 Theoretical framework

I selected complexity theory to enable me to understand organisations. In this chapter I argue for this choice of theory, discuss the conceptual framework on which it is based and demonstrate its applicability to this study. I also list its shortcomings. I limit the presentation to its utility in social science.

3.3 Motivation for complexity theory

I decided on complexity theory (CT) for three broad reasons. First, as I intend to discuss in Chapter Four, the study was influenced by a critical realist understanding of what exists and how we know about it. Hence, I wanted a theory that would link abstract theorizing and practice. Therefore CT, because of its concern with describing the dynamic interactions, interdependences and interconnections of agents in an organisation was a suitable theory for the study. Its view of emergence, nonlinearity, causation, non-reductionism and agency as I demonstrate below, tends to be consistent with some of the assumptions in critical realism (Byrne, 1998; Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002; Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005; Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006; Mason, 2009 and Ayers, 2011).

Second, one of the goals of this study was to explore ways that could make PHE more sustainable (refer to Chapter One, Section 1.5.3). CT posits an *open* system in which various generative mechanisms are either in operation or can become operational if they are triggered (Mason, 2009). As such, complexity seemed a relevant theory for this study in that sustainability intervention in organisations ought to target various factors. Mason (2009, p. 117) explains:

> Sustainable change, characterized by new properties and behaviours in the education system, emerges from the interaction of a myriad factors in the economic, political, social and cultural environments in which education is situated.

Lastly, I said in Chapter One that I intended to understand the nature and causes of the challenges that private higher education in Malawi faces. CT views organisations as “dynamic, living, social systems… created to organize the activities and resources needed to provide care” (in my case, to provide education) (Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005, pp. 671 – 672). This view is in sharp contrast to seeing organisations as mechanistic systems that achieve stability through strict, top-down control of personnel (Morrison, 2002; Nooteboom, 2007 and Mason, 2008 and 2009). Although Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel (2005) wrote from a health care perspective, I considered their observation pertinent in my case. I needed a theory that would be “a stimulus for shaking loose some of the fundamental beliefs many of us hold about the world… we have a new … refreshing lens through which to view … organisations” (Ibid., p. 672).

3.4 Types of complexity theory

There are many varieties of complexity theory (Manson 2001; Alhadeff-Jones, 2008 and Morrison, 2010). For this study, I used the type that Manson (2001, p. 409) refers to as "aggregate complexity". Aggregate complexity focuses on and describes interactions, interdependences, interconnections and interrelationships that take place among and between agents in organisations as well as between organisations (Mason, 2001, pp. 409 - 412).

3.5 The meaning and origin of complexity theory

The description of CT that I present is necessarily brief. Detailed descriptions could be obtained from the cited literature. Complexity,

> cannot be summarised in the word complexity, brought to a law of complexity, reduced to the idea of complexity. Complexity cannot be something which would be defined in a simple way and would replace simplicity. Complexity is a word-problem and not a word-solution (Morin, as cited in Alhadeff-Jones, 2008, p. 66).

CT is a theory that comprises a variety of theories drawn from physics, biology, mathematics, economics, anthropology, ecology, sociology, information technology, psychology and medicine, and chaos theory (Rihani & Geyer, 2001; Morrison, 2008 and Mason, 2009). It concerns itself with understanding environments, organisations or complex systems, patterns of interaction and interdependence, changes that occur within the systems and the emergent properties that result from the interaction patterns (Byrne, 2005; Mason, 2008 and Jones & Corner, 2012).

Complexity refers to complex (not complicated or intricate) dynamics that result from the interaction of interconnected and interdependent agents that comprise systems in response to limited information at their disposal (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 632). Byrne (2005, p. 97) defines complexity theory as, "the interdisciplinary understanding of reality as composed of complex open systems with emergent properties and transformational potential". In addition, Morrison (2008, p. 20) describes complexity theory as "a theory of survival, evolution, development and adaptation".

3.6 Complex adaptive systems and constitutive agents

In CT, a system is described as complex if large numbers of constituent agents, subsystems and elements "are connected to and interact with each other in many different ways" (Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 56). If a system is dissipative in the sense that it exchanges energy, information and resources within its subsystems and with its external environment and is capable of changing, it is referred to as an open Complex Adaptive System (CAS) (Rihani & Geyer, 2001, p. 239; Mason, 2008, pp. 38 - 39; Porter & Cordoba, 2009, p. 337; Mason, 2009, p. 117 and Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 58). Thus, higher education institutions are complex adaptive systems. They tend to be managed through traditional hierarchies and chains of command and seek to improve their adaptability and sustainability in their environments (Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 58).

Systems (organisations) are made up of agents (elements) who may be people. They may also be nonhuman processors or machines like computer systems, institutions, departments, corporations, motor vehicles, or pieces of furniture that enable or constrain "organisation and re-organization of and by these constituents" (Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005, p. 673; Mason, 2009, p. 118 and Morrison, 2010).

3.7 Complexity theory: Conceptual framework

Complexity theory comprises a number of concepts that I summarise in the following paragraphs. I relate their significance and relevance to the study.

3.6.1 Nonlinearity

The first concept that informs CT is nonlinearity in the behaviour of social systems. Nonlinearity implies an open system understanding of social practices. It means that social practices occur in an environment in which various mechanisms enable, constrain, weaken, interfere with or eliminate other factors. As a result, it becomes difficult to predict with certainty long-term outcomes and effects of practices, policies or events (Byrne, 2005 and Mason, 2009).

For example, in this study, some of the research participants in the site expressed dissatisfaction with the outcome of financial and other investments they had made to improve Internet facilities. The outcome was less than expected and the institution still faces a challenge in the availability of Internet service. In other words, other factors interfered with or constrained or hindered the expected outcome. I discuss this issue in Chapter Six.

Another example: Some research participants observed that there was a mismatch between efforts spent in improving learners' residences and what the learners do (outcomes). The participants reported that some of the learners vandalised and abused school property and facilities, the very facilities that were intended to make the lives of the learners more comfortable and convenient. In other words, there was discrepancy between input and output.

3.6.2 Causality

The second concept concerns causality. In CT, causality in the social world "is complex and contingent". Outcomes of actions (causes) tend to depend on or are affected by other factors. Haggis (2008) argues: "There is causality, but not of the 'a causes b' kind" (p. 167) because of the "unplanned and uncontrolled mechanisms that emerge naturally among interacting adaptive agents acting in situations" (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 637). Therefore, effects of actions may be greater or less, expected or unexpected: "A single cause may in fact lead to a multiplicity of effects; conversely, a single effect may be produced by a multiplicity of causes" (Byrne, 2005, p. 97 and Mason, 2008). In other words, various and multiple factors come or fail to come into operation in the generation of the outcomes. Therefore, making long-term prediction may not be possible (Mason, 2009, p. 119).

This understanding of causation in CT is similar to the assumption of causation in critical realism (see Chapter Four, Section 4.1.2, for a description of causation and causality in critical realism). In other words, in attempting to understand causal factors of the challenges that private higher education face, I needed to be open-minded. The causes could be within or outside the institutions. They could even be in both domains.

For example, in the study, one of the findings was that agencies have different causes for providing higher education. MoEST provides it not only as a strategy for training personnel who can work towards the social-economic development of the country but also because of pressure from international organisations to improve access to higher education. As previously mentioned, in Malawi, access to higher education is one of the lowest in the world (refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.10.1.1). On the other hand, private providers offer it for political, religious and business reasons (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1). In other words, there are potentially many causes for the single social phenomenon, higher education.

3.6.3 Agency

CT views human beings as capable of taking positive action to improve their condition. However, CT concedes that there are limits to agential actions given the open systems understanding (Mason, 2008 and Callaghan, 2008). It is important to note that in CT, agency tends to be understood in relation to patterns of relationships and dynamic interactions of people in organisations. In other words, agential actions are relational. Thus, CT takes "both [an] agency and structure approach" in explaining social phenomena (Mason, 2009, p. 114).

In addition, patterns of relationships depend on the rate of the flow of information through a system, richness of connectivity between and among agents and the level of diversity within and between the schemata of agents (Mason, 2009). In other words, system adaptation to a large extent depends on a network of relationships, interdependences and interconnections of constituent agents.

Emphasis on collective effort in CT as it is implied in dynamic interaction, interconnection and interdependence of agents was significant in this study. It prompted me to investigate roles that different agents in different systems play in the provision of education. It also motivated me to seek to understand the quality of relationships and interdependences that exist between the research site and other institutions such as MoEST, non-governmental organisations and other private higher education providers.

Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009, p. 642) say that interdependence means the extent to which an agent seeks to satisfy a need. In other words, complexity theorists believe that agents in a system play their roles because they realize that it may be to their advantage to work with others. However, needs tend to differ. Hence, agents in a system may pursue different goals and objectives, not necessarily guided by the official goals or objectives of a system. In other words, agents may use the system to fulfill personal goals.

One of the implications of interdependence from the CT perspective is that unless an agent has a need that could be satisfied through collective effort, the agent is less likely to be committed to the collective effort. As I demonstrate in Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1.1, the proprietors of the research site seldom visit the institution or commit themselves to dealing with some of the challenges that the research site faces. One of the interpretations of this behaviour would be that the proprietors lack the need to motivate themselves to support the institution. It may therefore be argued that the quality of interdependence tends to be weak.

3.6.4 Non-reductionism

According to CT, social systems are complex and "should be understood in a holistic manner". Systems have emergent properties (characteristics or qualities) that may not be observed in the separate parts, individual agents or elements. The properties that emerge from patterns of relationships, interactions and interdependences are contingent on a numbers of factors: the nature of interactions, interrelationships, heterogeneity of agents, flow of information among and between the agents and the elements, and time and place (Mason, 2009, p. 121). As such, for a system to survive in its environment, it has to keep its wholeness and "partness" of the environment (Nooteboom, 2007, p. 646).

The implication of this principle was that I needed to focus the study on outcomes of interactions and relationships between and among agents rather than on a single agent. Also, I needed to understand practices in the research site from a Christian as well as a secular worldview. The institution had to keep its "partness" of the sponsoring organisation as well as of the secular systems like the MoEST policies. In fact, even the Christian worldview itself was a particular worldview, informed by the doctrines, norms, organisation patterns, discourse and policies of the sponsoring organisation. The worldview could be a source of challenge(s) as well as a tool for dealing with challenges in an institution.

Dyck & Wiebe (2012) observed that there is a relationship between organisational practice and religious beliefs about salvation: “How people understand salvation often has an influence on and coincides with changes in social and organisational structures and systems” (pp. 302 – 303). For instance, in this study, a participant cited drunkenness among some of the learners as one of the challenges that the institution faces. The institution does not allow learners or staff members to drink. The rule is based on some of the religious beliefs that the institution espouses. As such, drunkenness was considered to be a spiritual challenge.

3.6.5 Requisite variety/complexity

Uhl-Bien et al., as cited in Hanna et al. (2011, p. 216) define requisite complexity as “the matching of an individual, team or organization’s level of complexity to the demands of its environment”. This refers to having heterogeneous and diverse constituent agents whose knowledge, mental models, skills, competences and abilities can be utilized in dealing with potential challenges that arise or may arise in an organisation’s internal and/or external environment. It attempts to match threats to the survival of a system with resources that are within a system so that the threats can be averted, confronted or eliminated while keeping the internal structure of a system intact (Ashby, 1956 and Nooteboom, 2007).

Requisite variety has implications for system adaptation. According to Boisot & McKelvey (As cited in Hanna et al., 2011, p. 216), if an organisation is too complex, chaos and inefficiency tends to emerge. On the other hand, when there is too little complexity in an organisation it becomes too restricted to understand and respond to challenges in its environment. It has further been observed that when a system reaches a critical level of complexity (critical mass), phase transition takes place. Phase transition enables the emergence of new properties and behaviours. Therefore, a certain level of complexity and diversity should be reached for a system to achieve a sustainable autocatalytic stage, that is, to be able to maintain its own momentum in a particular direction (Mason, 2009, p. 37). In other words, for a system to reach a level of self-support and perform better there is a need for sufficient diversity and complexity of the constituent agents. In case of human agents, they have to be heterogeneous and diverse in their experiences, understanding, abilities and worldview. For nonhuman agents, they have to be diverse so that they can be put to different uses to enable a system to adapt to its environment (Mason, 2009, p. 39).

In this study I use the concept of requisite variety/complexity to understand the implications for availability, unavailability and inadequacy of human and nonhuman agents' heterogeneity, diversity of experience, skills, academic and professional qualifications and job performance in the research site. In case of nonhuman agents, I investigated availability, unavailability and inadequacy of resources, facilities and academic programmes, sources of funding and diversity and their implications for system adaptation (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3).

For example, one of the findings of the study is that the institution offers three academic programmes: theology, business studies and education. As a result, the institution admits only the applicants who are interested in such programmes. Applicants who want to study natural sciences, ICT or other areas are not admitted. That is to say, the institution fails to match the demand in its external environment.

3.6.6 Emergence

The concept of emergence is intricately connected with the dynamic interactions, interrelationships and connections that exist among and between constitutive agents of a system, and is of particular interest in CT (Horn, 2008, p. 132). It refers to new behaviours, properties, and often larger structures that result from dynamic interactions and connections of constituent agents and elements at the lower levels of a system (Cudworth & Hobden, 2010, p. 403). It implies "a bottom-up change" (Porter & Cordoba, 2009, p. 338). Waldrop (As cited in Mason, 2009, p. 118) says:

> Thus, molecules would form cells, neurons would form brains, species would form ecosystems, consumers and corporations would form economies and so on. At each level, new emergent structures would form and engage in new emergent behaviours. Complexity, in other words, [is] really a science of emergence.

Thus, the concept of emergence is of much interest in explaining the success or failure of change interventions in organisations (Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005; Horn, 2008; Mason, 2008 and Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

As mentioned above, emergent phenomena mostly appear when a system has reached a critical level of diversity and complexity (critical mass) that gives rise to phase transition. The phenomena may be abrupt and discontinuous or may emerge gradually and develop into something else. Mason (2009, pp. 47 – 48) lists additional conditions that tend to enable desirable behaviours and properties to emerge.

For example, I observed that in 2008 the institution was re-organised and restructured following its failure to prepare learners for graduation. Parents, guardians and learners exerted pressure on management to deal with the challenge. The situation prompted the proprietors to establish a University Council which appointed a new Vice Chancellor, Business Manager, Registrar, Director of Development and Public Relations and Dean of Students' Affairs. As a result, connections among agents and patterns of interaction changed because of the introduction of diverse and heterogeneous constitutive agents. The restructuring and re-organisation enabled phase transition to take place. New ideas, approaches, processes and structures to deal with the challenge emerged. However, the institution faced new challenges: poor interpersonal relationships between the new Vice Chancellor and the proprietors and discipline problems among both learners and staff emerged. In other words, new behaviours and properties emerged (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.2).
Emergent phenomena, according to CT, tend to be unique to particular contexts such as leadership behaviour, physical and social environment, space and time (Mason, 2009, p. 118 and Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, pp. 637 - 638). They are inclined to be constrained and enabled by particular features of a system and a system's interaction with other systems beyond its boundaries (Haggis, 2008, p. 167). In other words, emergent phenomena tend to be context-specific.

The concept of emergence in CT was useful in this study. In Chapter One, I argued that it was necessary to understand the underlying causes of the challenges which private institutions of higher education in Malawi face. My argument was based on the observation that causal mechanisms tend to be context-specific (Houston, 2010, p. 76). I used emergence as a conceptual framework for exploring and making sense of outcomes of interactions, interrelationships and interdependences of agents in as well as outside the research site (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1).

3.6.7 Complexity leadership

According to Hanna, Lord & Pearce (2011, p. 216), agents' interactions, connection, interrelationships and interdependences in a social system are facilitated by complexity leadership behaviour. Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009) present three functions of leadership: administrative, and adaptive and enabling. I summarise these below.

3.6.7.1 Administrative function

Administrative function deals with day-to-day formal operations of an organisation. Leaders create systems, structures and policies that facilitate the flow of information across all levels of an organisation so as to effectively engage in and manage change dynamics (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 644).

The administrative function serves two roles. First, it tends to foster enabling conditions that promote dynamic interaction, interdependence, heterogeneity of agents and adaptive tension, that is, pressure on a system to elaborate and adjust. Second, it mediates relationships between administrative structures and adaptive structures to ensure that adaptive functions serve the goals and mission of administrative function (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, pp. 645 – 646). In other words, complexity leadership seeks to guide a system's adaptability by attending to its goals and mission and informal structures and leadership. The two functions are achieved by creating and implementing formal and informal organisational structures, and by coordinating and facilitating the emergence of desirable properties and behaviours in systems (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009 and Hanna, Lord & Pearce, 2011).

3.6.7.2 Adaptive function (Agentic behaviour)

Adaptive function focuses on engaging with informal leadership processes that occur as agents "work together to generate and advance novel solutions in the face of adaptive needs of the organisation" (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 633). Complexity leadership tends to view informal leadership and networks as indispensable to organisational function; they should also be nurtured and enabled in an organisation. Hence, informal leadership and communication processes are to be brought to the surface rather than be repressed (Lincoln, as cited by Nickerson & Zenger in Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 644). It ought to be noted that the motive for nurturing informal leadership processes is to enhance an organisation's performance. That is to say, complexity leadership is concerned with achieving the goals of an organisation.

3.6.7.3 Enabling functions

Enabling functions focus on creating conducive conditions for adaptive and administrative functions to take place. This is achieved through entanglement whereby dynamic interaction between top-down administrative function and adaptive function are enabled through leadership behaviour.

According to complexity theory, leaders apply various skills to interface formal and informal dynamic interaction. These include patterning attention by communicating what is important in a given situation; thinking in 'timestreams' whereby a leader deals with an issue by considering the present situation, past experiences and its implications for future action; bonding, which involves establishing a network of interpersonal relationships with and between agents depending on their needs, preferences and responsibilities; and by creating attractors (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, pp. 639 – 640). Figure 1 below summarises this.

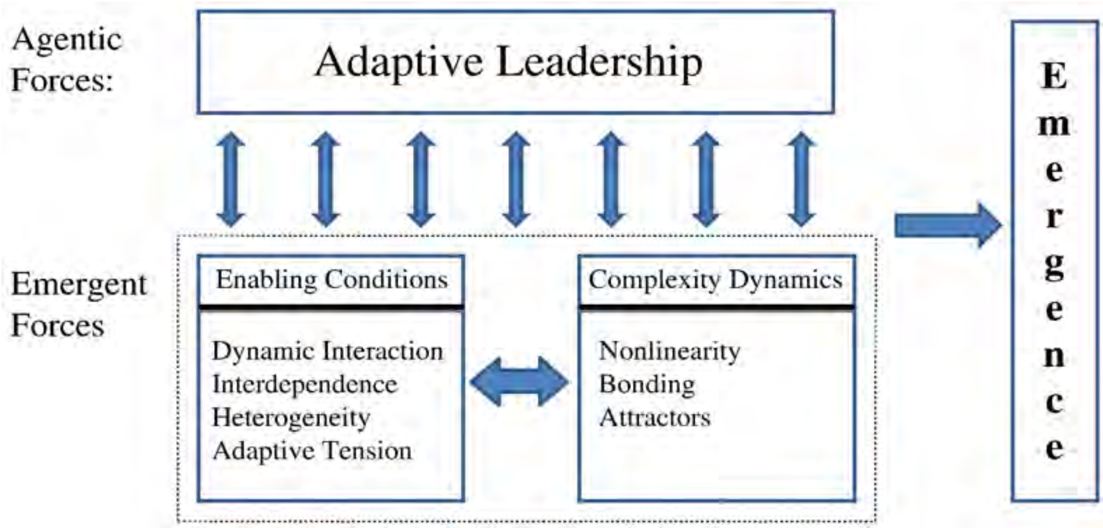

Figure 1: The adaptive function of Complexity Leadership Theory (Adopted from Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 644).

One of the findings of this study, for example, was that informal communication tends to be a source of conflict and frustration among agents in the research site. For instance, one of the participants said:

> *The relationship we have with [the proprietor] is such that we are not pulling together…. As a result, we operate on different wavelengths and are often in unnecessary conflict. The (proprietor) is not open…. They [sic] like to do their things in secrecy based on rumours, gossip and lies. This creates a frustrating situation (VC, interviewed on November 10, 2011, at 15h00).*

In other words, the participant does not use the information he has obtained to seek clarification or question the basis for the practices of the proprietors. Instead, he considers secrecy, rumours, gossip and lies to be a problem. As a result, he gets frustrated because he and the proprietor tend to make incompatible decisions. In chapter Six I use complexity leadership theory as a heuristic device for reinterpreting data and contextualizing the findings of this study.

3.6.8 Co-evolution

Co-evolution is another concept in CT. The concept refers to qualitative changes that that take place among agents in a system as they interact with other agents and/or systems within or outside the system. The change may come about through purposeful or latent learning or through both processes. In other words, connection, interdependence and dynamic interaction among agents in a system and between systems gives rise to new properties and behaviours not only in agents but also in systems themselves (Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005, p. 671; Mason 2009 and Cudworth & Hobden, 2010). Information and energy pass through the boundaries to/from the institution and the external environment thereby facilitating co-evolution (Nooteboom, 2007, p. 410).

In this research I sought to investigate and understand outcomes of patterns of relationships in constituent agents of a system. For example, a participant observed that house rent in a nearby village had more than doubled due to the high demand by non-resident learners and staff. Furthermore, most of the landlords had learnt to renovate and beautify their properties. Some people had built houses for renting as a way of financially supporting their parents and relatives. The parents collect the rent and use it to support themselves. On the other hand, it has also been observed that some learners access illicit drugs and beer from agents in the external environment. A participant said:

> *We have problems of alcohol drinking and drug abuse. In the past, this was not a problem because we monitored how they moved. Now, that is not possible. … you know, we have these villagers who walk in and out the campus. Some of them bring this stuff, chamba (Indian hemp), beer, tobacco, and so on. But some students go into the village or to town to drink beer (Interviewed on October 06, 2012 at 10h00).*

In other words, interaction of constituent agents within and between systems has enabled quantitative and qualitative changes in the agents as well as the system. That is, the agents and the systems co-evolve.

3.6.9 System adaptation and sustainability

According to Gallo & Christensen (2011), Savaya & Spiro (2011), Shriberg (2002) and Filho (2000) there is still a lack of consensus on the definition of the concept 'sustainability'. In fact, Bell & Morse (2008, p. 10) observe, "Almost every article, paper or book on sustainability bemoans the fact that the concept is broad and lacks a broad consensus; this is usually followed by the authors' own preferred definitions which in turn add to the lack of consensus!"

Comm & Mathaisel (2008) and Walton & Galea (2005) apply the concept of institutional sustainability to refer to strategies that higher education institutions employ to deal with financial challenges that result from the reduction or total discontinuation of funding from sponsors and proprietors. The strategies include carrying out consultancy services for remuneration in industries; out-sourcing non-core activities of an institution; a number of institutions making joint bulk purchases of services, materials and resources; using Information and Communication Technologies to collect, process, store and retrieve information; and making maximum use of less institutional needs like personnel and resources to achieve more.

Savaya & Spiro (2011) observe that sustainability of social programmes "is a complex phenomenon, affected by a potentially wide range of predictors" (p. 2). The predictors are a) diversity of funding; b) commitment and support of the auspice organisation management; c) involvement of initial funder; d) quality of the project leadership and e) community support.

Four of the factors in the model were captured in the concept of requisite complexity (see Section 3.5.5 above). The one on leadership was incorporated in the discussion on complexity leadership (See Section 3.5.7 above). Thus the model was useful in the reinterpretation of data in Chapter Six in this study. For example, in an interview on governance of the institution, one of the participants said:

> *Another thing the (proprietor) does not look at the university as an institution which will develop capacity in terms of Chaplains, teachers, accountants and Supervisors. They (sic) look at it … as a competitor rather than a child of their own. When they take it as a competitor, then they'll try to reduce its power* (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00).

That is, the participant tends to believe that support from sponsoring organisations is not only weak but also dysfunctional in that the proprietor views the institution as a competitor. Commitment and support of the organisation management is weak as the proprietor works to weaken the capacity of the institution to adapt to its environment. In other words, governance is a problem. In this case, sustainability of the institution, according to Savaya & Spiro (2011) is a challenge.

Another finding of the study is that the research site does not have adequate funds for the operation of the institution. Lack of adequate funds was attributed to reliance on fees. A participant said:

> *We began very small. We began from almost nothing…. We have noticed that the greatest challenge has always been finances. Being a private institution, we are basically relying on fees alone for almost all operations* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011, at 10h00).

From this excerpt, it can be concluded that the institution lacks diverse sources of funding to enable it to meet its financial obligations. As a result the institution fails to have adequate facilities to support teaching and learning functions or accommodate learners. That is, the institution's operation tends to be restricted:

> *Another challenge is that the rooms are not enough to accommodate all of us as students. For example, in one room, altogether we're nine. The room is not big enough for all of us and our bags* (Interviewed on November 14, 2011, 14h00)

Espinosa & Porter (2011) present a sustainability model from the CAS perspective (Figure 1) based on the assumption that an organisation "has a symbiotic, coevolving relationship with the greater society and the ecosystem". At the Macro level (sustainable commons and human systems), sustainability or an organisation's capability to adapt involves maintaining the supply of the commons. These are resources such as clean water, clean air, land and so on that are used by all but owned by none. It involves engaging and negotiating with government agencies, business and local community and civil society organisations for supply and maintenance of these resources (p. 59).

On the other hand, at intra-system level, an organisation at a micro level makes decisions that impact on the macro and intra-system. The decisions impact on the commons in such a way that they meet the needs of the constituent agents without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The intra-systems are economic (wages, buying and selling services, etc.); ecological (land use, disposal of waste, air, water, etc.); social performance (work conditions, service to community and society, etc.) and cultural (ways of life) in nature. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Decision-making processes on these issues is ongoing because an organisation exists in ever-changing self-organising systems. Therefore, institutional adaptability and sustainability can be improved through organisational learning facilitated by complexity leadership behaviour (Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 59).

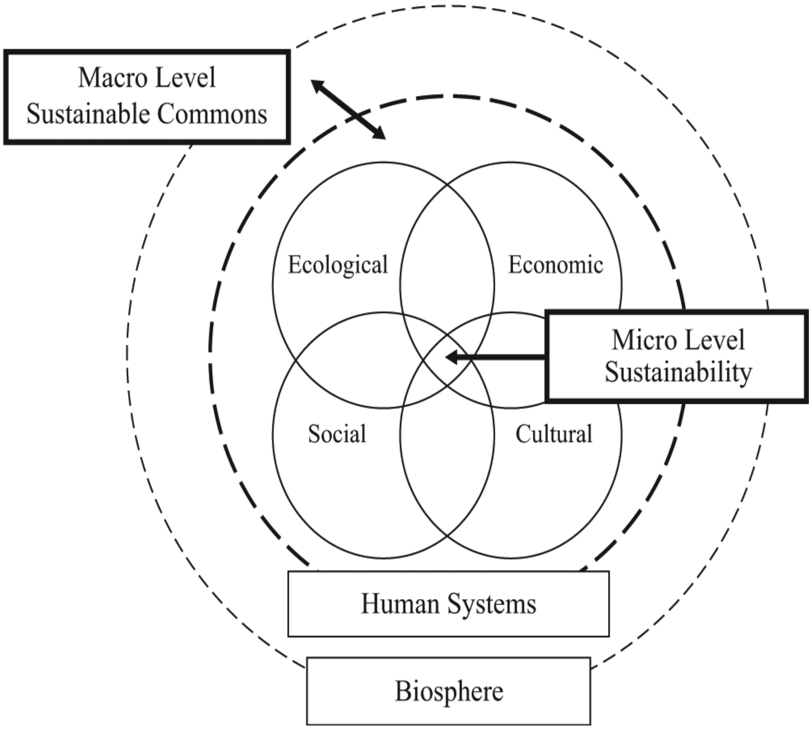

Figure 2: *Sustainability from CAS perspective. (Adapted from Espinosa & Porter, 2011, p. 58).*

Arguing from the CT perspective, Mason (2009, p. 114) says that organisational sustainability and adaptation interventions therefore need to target different strata in a system:

> In the complexity of the educational environment, the plethora of relevant constituent elements – agents and structures – includes teachers, students, parents and other community leaders, the state and its education departments, economic structures and business organizations, NGOs, agencies, and so on. Intervention to differing but sufficient extents in each of these areas is what would probably be necessary to shift a prevailing ethos in education. In other words, change and sustainable development in education, at whatever level, are not so much a consequence of effecting change in one particular factor or variable, no matter how powerful the influence of that factor.

In other words, in terms of complexity theory, to enable an institution to perform better, causes of challenges have to be identified. Then, interventions that may make the system adaptable or sustainable have to target the source of these causes either at intra-system or at macro level or at both levels (Espinosa & Porter, 2011). I utilise complexity theory's view of system adaptation and sustainability in this study.

3.7 Limitations of complexity theory

Complexity theory as the lens enabled me to understand what an organisation is. Using complexity theory, I was able to understand the nature of the challenges that the PIHEs in Malawi face. However, I observed that complexity theory has limitations.

First, complexity theory focuses on the aggregate interconnectedness and dynamic interactions of agents in a system. By doing so, it tends to downplay *individual* human agency and its implications for an organisation (Callaghan, 2008, p. 403). That is, CT tends to overlook the influence of human agency in transforming systems to suit his/her own interests (Child & Rodrigues, 2011, p. 804). Greenfield & Ribbins (1994, p. 6) observe that organizations are invented social realities that reflect the values of people with access to power. People use power to determine and shape organizational life. In this study, I dealt with the limitation by upholding a critical realist understanding of agency and social structures (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006 and Fleetwood, 2008). In critical realism, agents identify structures (norms, rules, regulations, policies, routine practices, etc.) that tend to enable or constrain personal or organisational performance and construct strategies to use the structures to achieve personal or organisational goals. The strategy that agents use depends on the nature of the relationship that exists between agents and the structure (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006, pp. 692 - 693). That is, CT tends to focus on interactions and interdependence of agents in a system but downplays the role of agencies in transforming structures so as to achieve personal goals. As the study found, the interaction between agency and structure may give rise to conflicts and undesirable behaviour (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3)

Second, complexity theory is inadequate in accounting for motives of agents who work in an organisation in which adaptive leadership fails to create conducive conditions for dynamic interaction to take place. In addition, it tends to ignore leaders' perceptions of themselves in relation to their followers' intentions, aspirations, perceptions and organisational context as a potential source of interpersonal conflict or cooperation. To compensate for this limitation, I draw on transformational leadership theory which I discuss below.

3.8 Transformational leadership theory

Transformational leadership theory is closely associated with Thomas McGregor Burns (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011). It is informed by the belief that:

> Given adequate support, organisational members become highly engaged and motivated by goals that are inspirational because those goals are associated with values in which they strongly believe – or are persuaded to strongly believe (Leithwood & Sun, 2012, p. 388).

Thus, whereas transactional leadership focuses on rewarding performance, transformational leadership (TL) focuses on motivating organisational members to do more than they are expected to. It aims at raising the awareness and consciousness of followers to higher levels of conduct and morality. Therefore, TL tends to be associated with justice, job and personal satisfaction, efficacy, quality and quantity of organisational members' performance and participative decision-making (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 25; Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011; Mulla & Krishnan, 2011 and Wang & Rode, 2010).

3.8.1 Transformational leadership in school settings

In education, Leithwood and others modified and adapted TL to fit the school context. Their model of TL is summarised in four broad themes: setting directions; developing people; redesigning the organisation and improving the instructional programme (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Since my study focused mainly on management rather than curriculum and instruction, I omit the theme on improving instruction. Below I present Leithwood's model and demonstrate the relevance of the themes to this study.

Concept	**Focus**
Building school vision	Identifying, developing and articulating shared vision;

	Building consensus; Monitoring progress in achieving goals.
Providing intellectual stimulation	Challenging staff's assumptions; Stimulating and encouraging creativity and innovation; Providing information for self-evaluation.
Offering individual support	Providing individualised personal and professional support; Listening and attending to individual's opinions and needs; Acting as a mentor or coaching members; Treating members as individuals with unique needs and capacities; Supporting staff's professional development.
Modeling best practices and important educational values	Providing a model of high ethical behaviour; Instilling pride; Respecting and trusting staff; Demonstrating willingness to change own practices given new understanding and circumstances.
Demonstrating high performance expectations	Expecting high standard of professionalism from staff; Expecting teaching colleagues to hold high expectations for learners; Expecting staff to be effective innovators.
Creating productive school culture	Providing atmosphere of caring and trusting among staff; Building a cohesive school culture around shared values; Promoting beliefs that reflect the school vision.
Developing structures to foster participation in school decisions	Ensuring participative decision making processes; Providing working conditions for collaborative planning and professional growth; Distributing leadership broadly among staff.

Table 1. Leithwood Model of Transformational Leadership (Adapted and built from Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 26 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012, pp. 400 – 401).

3.8.2 Broad themes in Transformational leadership in school settings

I indicated above that I left out the theme on improving instructional programmes. The theme could be best dealt with in instructional leadership theory within the field of curriculum and instruction. In this section, I outline activities in each theme.

3.8.2.1 Setting directions

Transformational school leaders (TSL) formulate a broad purpose, a vision, which is appealing and inspiring to staff. They share the vision, formulate goals and make decisions that are consistent with the goals. The leaders expect high standards of professionalism and effective innovation from the staff and expect teachers to hold high expectations for learners. Authority is distributed to whoever is able to inspire higher levels of commitment (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

3.8.2.2 Developing people

TSLs provide individualized support through attentive listening, coaching, attending to individual needs and supporting individual staff according to their unique capacities. Leaders also encourage teachers to recontextualise their own and the school's practices, designing their own creative and innovative strategies to adjust and adapt. They expect creativity and provide them with information to evaluate their practices. TSLs model behaviour and demonstrate willingness to change their practices given new understanding or circumstances. They use positive affective words, reframe stressful situations into opportunities for personal growth and foster a sense of belonging and enthusiasm among followers (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

In the research site, one of the challenges is leaders' failure to model behaviour. The challenge can lead to low levels of trust between the leader and the follower. The leader's behaviour is not a model for subordinates to emulate. For instance, one of the followers wrote the following to the VC:

> *I am going to consult the Chancellor on exactly what I ought to do. I am going to do this because I have lost trust in you because of the untrue stories. Whoever told you those stories is not being fair to me…. This is one way of spoiling relations among faculty members. You make me suspicious of fellow departmental faculty members* (Office Memo, dated 14th September, 2011).

3.8.2.3 Redesigning the organisation

Transformational leaders promote the beliefs that reflect the vision of the institution, trust and observing a common set of values. They build structures to enable collaboration, participative decision-making processes, and are sensitive to the aspirations and requests that come from the wider community (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

As the study findings show (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6. 6.3.1.3.2), one of the challenges that the research site faces is the struggle to disregard the beliefs and common set of values of the institution. The practice tends to be one of the sources of conflict and mistrust between the administration and the proprietor. Also, lack of structures that enable collaboration and participative decision-making processes tend to underlie fragmented interpersonal relationships. For example, the DoF observes:

> *There're things that happen and you don't even know. You only get to know it because there's a requisition for money. And you say, but when was this decision made? So, even consultation with management is only done before an Administration Committee has been called. These are some of the things of which you're not even part of* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00).

3.8.3 Evaluation of transformational leadership theory

Transformational leadership theory is moral in the sense that it focuses on raising ethical needs and aspirations of both the leaders and the followers to higher-order needs of self-actualisation (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 115). It is democratic because it promotes and facilitates the development of participatory and collective decision-making structures and practices. In addition, it is based on the democratic values of respect for others, consensual decision-making and self-actualisation (Carmen & Fischer, 2011). In essence, transformational leadership theory enabled me to become sensitive to the nature of the challenges. The findings in this study indicate that some of the challenges in the research site tend to be concerned with interpersonal relationships.

However valuable the theory has been, it is inadequate nevertheless, in enabling one to understand organisational behaviour. It tends to espouse individualist values. In addition, the theory downplays power in organisations which are characterised by collectivist and large power distance values (Carmen & Fischer, 2011). I elucidate collectivist and large power distance issues in Chapter Seven in relation to the explanation of the causes of the challenges.

3.12 Summary

Complexity theory attempts to describe dynamic interactions, interdependences, connections and interrelationships of agents in a system and emergent behaviours and properties in the agents as well as the system. Agents may be human or nonhuman constituents of a system.

CT views a system as continuously interacting with other systems both within and outside itself. The interactions are nonlinear and the outcomes of the interactions are unpredictable in the long term. For systems to survive, they have to change and adapt to demands that arise in and outside the system. Adaptability of social systems tends to be influenced by leadership processes and practices. According to transformational theory, this involves leaders' interest in setting directions, developing people, redesigning organisations and improving instructional programmes.

In the chapter that follows I discuss the philosophy underpinning the methodology of the study - Critical realism of Roy Bhaskar.

Chapter Four

Critical realist methodology and methods

> *Everyone is a philosopher, though in his (sic) own way and unconsciously, since even in the slightest manifestation of any intellectual activity whatever, in 'language' there is contained a specific conception of the world* (Gramsci, as cited in Dobson, 2002, p. 2).

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I described my background, motivation and need of a methodology to guide this study. Henning et al. (As cited in Quinn, 2006, p. 60) defined methodology as:

> the coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the 'goodness of fit' to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose. The group of methods of data collection and analysis will also be coherent because the researcher has philosophized in a certain way about them and has made sure that they are compatible.

Research methods do more than just enable a scientist to carry out a study. They tend to reflect a researcher's conception of the world and therefore, the type of findings. As Clark, MacIntyre & Cruickshank (2007, p. 517) claim, "methods are imbued with all manner of philosophical tenets and ontological positions; that is, they must take implicit positions on what reality is, how it can be known and what ways are acceptable to do this". That is to say, research methods presuppose certain ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs.

Welsh & Dehler (2007, p. 407) say that social scientists hold assumptions that are derived from their practical experiences or perceptions or beliefs about the nature of reality and how knowledge is constructed. The assumptions guide the process by which the researchers collect data on social phenomena.

Therefore, in deciding on a methodology for this study I concurred with the argument that Danermark et al. (2002) make concerning the choice of methodology. They say that "the nature of the object of study determines what research methods are suitable and also what kind of knowledge it is at all possible to have of different phenomena in the world" (p. 41). Therefore, in this chapter, I argue for my choice of the methodology, its appropriateness for the study and its limitations.

4.2 Methodology

Given the nature of my object of research – social practices - I considered critical realism an appropriate underlying assumption for the methodology in this study. Critical realism acts as "a powerful under-labourer's device for understanding and explaining events but also for providing direction as to how we should respond to … events" (Houston, 2010, p. 77). That is, critical realism (CR) tends to enable research to take place by interrogating the assumptions and presuppositions of any theory (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006). Therefore critical realism describes and clarifies what reality is and the theories that can be formulated about it. In addition, CR concerns itself with acquiring knowledge of causal mechanisms that generate events and how the mechanisms actually generate the events (Danermark et al., 2002, p.108).

However, there are different types and perspectives within the realist paradigm. I subscribed to the critical realism that is closely associated with Roy Bhaskar and Rom Harre and was further developed and elaborated by Andrew Sayer, Berth Danermark, Mats Ekstrom, Liselotte Jakobsen and Joan Ch. Karlsson including Margaret Archer (Sayer, 2000, p. 3; Danermark et al., 2002, p. 5; Houston, 2010, p. 74 and Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008, p. 171). Since a detailed review of critical realism is beyond the scope of this study, I briefly discuss the pertinent properties of critical realist assumptions that I found to be appropriate and relevant to this study. I limit the arguments to discussing (a) the nature of reality of the social world; (b) reality as differentiated and stratified; (c) causality; (d) dimensions of knowledge; and (e) agency and structure. I am aware that some critical realists tend to avoid the use of the word 'institution' for an 'organisation' (Hodgson, as cited in Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2005, p. 684). I nevertheless use the concepts interchangeably throughout this study.

4.1.1 The reality of the social world

First, critical realists hold the view that human agents, practices and social structures (causal mechanisms, habits, procedures, institutions, resources, powers, rules, and conventions that constitute the world) are real. They exist independent of our knowledge of their effects. Reality "is something, which can have a causal influence or an ability to generate events" (Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012, p. 303). As such reality is assumed to extend beyond the observable to abstract phenomena like thoughts, intentions, motives and reasons because such phenomena have an influence and an effect on the way people behave and act (Danermark et al., 2002 and Fleetwood, 2004).

By contrast constructivists tend to believe that reality is subjective, that is, it depends upon subjective interpretations and understandings of what reality is (Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008, p. 171). CR also differs from the empiricist assumption that what is real is only that which can be experienced through the senses. Critical realists go beyond the subjective (reasons, thoughts, etc.) and observable reality - the empirical - to include thoughts, motives, intentions and the observable (Bergin, Wells & Owen 2008 and Danermark et al. 2002). Therefore, in this study, I took to be real the intentions and the motives that providers of higher education have. The motives and intentions influence them to provide higher education and deal with some of the challenges that they face.

Therefore, time and place, in critical realist philosophy, are significant. They form part of the context within which actions take place (Houston, 2010, p. 76). For example, in Chapter One, I stated that almost all the Christian institutions of higher education in Malawi were established in former post-secondary institutions. In case of the research site, in the first three years of its existence the governing council comprised people who had governed the college before. The institution operated under the same policies and practices. The policies were changed, modified and revised in due course to guide and fit the new development.

Thus, in this study I take the challenges that the private institutions of higher education face to be real, not just as figments of people's imaginations or perceptions subject to the interpretations of people (Danermark et al., 2002). They mostly exist external to the minds of the research participants - myself including - and form part of the social reality that characterises private higher education in Malawi. I therefore consider the challenges to be accessible for study; hence, the relevance of CR

3.2.2 Reality as differentiated and stratified

Critical realists view reality as differentiated into three domains that overlap hierarchically, namely, the Empirical, the Actual, and the Real. The Empirical domain comprises events (social practices) that are actually observed such as social interactions, meetings, procedures, ceremonies, rituals, classroom practices, artifacts and so on (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002; Mingers, 2004; Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008 and Houston, 2010).

Our experience of such phenomena, however, tends to be filtered by our socio-biographical characteristics and beliefs. In other words, critical realists believe that we notice and make sense of social practices and objects through the theories that we hold (Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008, p. 171). Thus, we may observe certain experiences and miss other experiences for lack of theory to guide us in the observation or make us aware of the event. In relation to this study, I had to look for a theory that would enable me to understand and interpret social practices such as interaction patterns and leadership management behaviour in the research site. As I discussed in Chapter Three, it was complexity theory and transformational leadership theories that I used as my lenses to observe and interpret the research phenomena.

The domain of the Actual is the domain of events that do or do not occur. Additionally, we may experience or not experience the events. Yet they exist. In other words, the existence of social practices does not necessarily depend on our experiencing them (Houston, 2010, p. 75). As Prowse (2010, p. 217) states, "This includes the E*mpirical* domain, but also includes those events that occur in the world but which nobody experiences. For example, if a tree falls in a forest but is not seen by someone, it occurs in the *Actual* domain".

The Empirical domain overlaps with the Actual in the sense that while the actual domain comprises both the social practices that we may experience or may not experience, the Empirical comprises only those events which we actually experience (Kurki, 2007, p. 365). Furthermore, events or non-events (social practices) according to critical realists, are generated by causal mechanisms in the deeper domain, the domain of social structures, generative mechanisms and powers, the domain of the Real (Mingers, 2004, p. 94). A mechanism is "that which can cause something in the world to happen (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 55).

Power here refers to "dispositions, capacities and potentials to cause certain things, but not others" (Hesketh & Fleetwood 2006, p. 68) depending on the structure of an object or the type of a social relationship between entities. For example, human beings have the power to speak a language but not to explode. However, it is only when the causal mechanisms are activated that social practices and experiences are produced. That is to say, entities, by virtue of their structure, have power and liability irrespective of whether or not the power is exercised to generate outcomes. On the other hand, according to critical realists, because there are myriads of causal mechanisms, powers and liabilities that may be at play at any given time, the outcomes of mechanisms may be cancelled or restrained or complemented or hindered or modified by the effects of other mechanisms (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002 and Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2008) (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.5).

This means then that the outcomes of the causal mechanisms are contingent on other factors (time, place, psychobiography, etc.) or situations that are prevalent in the environment (political, socioeconomic, etc.) that may also be outcomes of other generative mechanisms (Danermark et al., 2002; Welsh & Dehler, 2007 and Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008). Hence, according to Houston (2010, p. 76), social practices are outcomes of interaction between and among contextual factors, for example, material resources and culture, time and place and human agency. Causal mechanisms, powers and social structures cannot be directly experienced in the sense of being smelt, touched, heard or seen. We come to know of their existence through their effects (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 58).

As Mingers (2004, p. 94) demonstrates in Fig 1 below, the domain of the Real is the deepest and the widest of the three and includes the Actual. It is in this domain that mechanisms and powers that generate and condition events lie. In other words, events and social practices have deep-lying invisible causes.

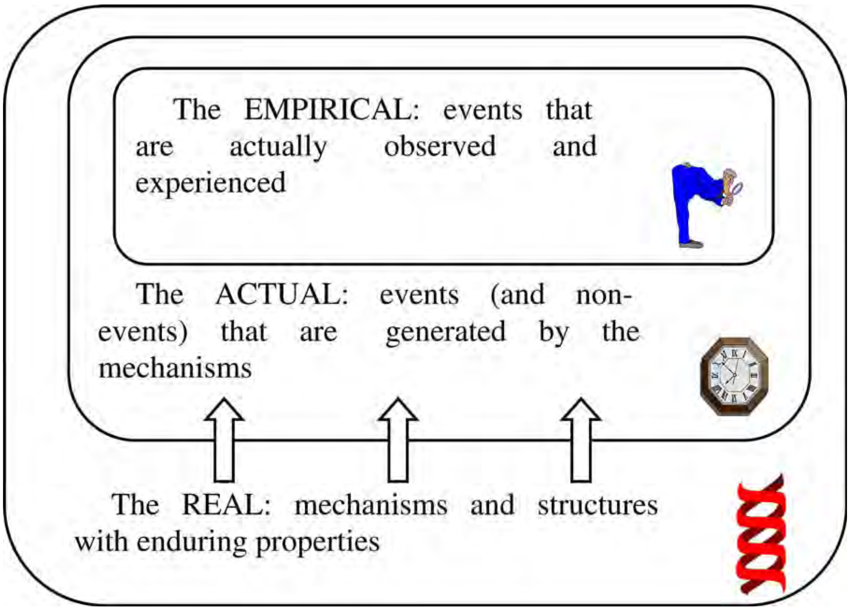

Figure 3: Reality: Empirical, Actual, and Real domains (Adapted from Mingers, 2004, p. 94).

In addition to the differentiation of reality, critical realists assume that causal powers in reality are multilayered or stratified. Social practices exist and occur in an open system in which other systems with their own structures and causal powers tend to affect outcomes in various ways. A system is viewed to be open when it is characterized by "lack of event regularity, where event regularity is styled as 'whenever events x^1, x^2 … x^n then event y'" (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006, p. 685). A system for example, may be political, religious, economic, or natural in the sense of a physical entity like weather. As a result, it may not be possible to predict with certainty long-term total effects or outcomes of social interventions (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 56) (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.5.2 Non-linearity).

In addition, the conjunction of two or more systems or objects may give rise to new phenomena with their own novel characteristics or properties that are irreducible to properties and behaviours of the initial system or objects (Clark, MacIntyre & Cruickshank, 2007 and Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008 (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.5.6). As Sayer (2000, p. 12) put it:

> [the] world is characterised by emergence … situations in which the conjunction of two or more features or aspects gives rise to new phenomena, which have properties which are

> irreducible to those of their constituents, even though the latter are necessary for their existence.

According to Houston (2010, pp. 77 – 82), for instance, social life operates in five interdependent strata, each with its own underlying causal powers and mechanisms. These are summarized in the table below (Figure 4), adapted from Houston (2010, p. 79).

Domain	**Characteristics**
Domain of the person	This deals with the embodied person comprising physical, psychological, cognitive, genetic, existential and anthropological mechanisms.
Domain of situated activity	This is the sphere of the ‘face-to-face’ where social actions occur, meanings are attributed, and responses initiated according to these meanings. Underpinning these actions are mechanisms that preserve the social order.
Domain of social settings	This is the institutional sphere comprising informal group settings such as family life but also the formal sphere of organisations. In these settings, mechanisms operate to reproduce social relations, positions and practices.
Domain of culture	This is the sphere of the ‘lifeworld’ comprising norms, rituals, customs and tastes along with generative mechanisms that sustain meaning and social cohesion or else create division.
Domain of polity/economy	In this sphere, political and economic ‘system’ imperatives are to the fore, having great influence over the preceding domains.

Figure 4: Domains of social life (Developed from Layder, 1997 adapted from Houston 2010, p. 79).

The critical realist assumption that reality is differentiated and stratified offered me space for investigating the causes of the challenges in private higher education beyond the infrastructure and the accounts of the members of the research site and other stakeholders in the institution.

For example, from the data that I collected, I sought to understand why and how the university was established, dominant interpersonal relationships within and between the institution and its environment, the mechanisms in the macro social structures that impact on the institution like the Malawi Government policies on higher education, contextual factors like the geographical allocation (space) and time (period, era) and their effects on the institution, the global economic situation and its impact on the institution, the socio-cultural practices and beliefs and so on.

In addition, the assumption of a stratified ontology enabled me to understand why some of the practices and events that were taking place in the organisation were not what the managers expected to occur. Different generative mechanisms in the internal and external environment give rise to various outcomes (Houston, 2010, pp. 77 - 82).

For example, in the case institution, I found that the proprietors resented the behaviour of leaders and learners in the research site and vice versa. Proprietors observed that the institution was becoming too secular characterized by lax moral behaviour, drunkenness and lack of interest in religious activities in some of the learners. The leaders of the institution on the other hand, accused the sponsoring organisation of failure to provide financial support, being too secretive and ignorant of the ideals of a university. I sought the explanation of the phenomena by examining the social environment in which the institution is situated, domains of social life that Layder proposes (Houston 2010, p. 79) and governance practices.

I was able to explore private higher education in Malawi in the light of the concept of stratification of reality. For example, one of the research participants said:

> *So, there was change of politics in 1994. It's when the government realized that the demand for university education was at an alarming rate and that the University of Malawi alone could not consume this demand … Government deliberately allowed liberalization of higher education so that it did not become a monopoly of one institution… the faith community was the first to open private institution universities … and then it also went on that even individuals and other people came together and opened universities.*

4.1.2 Causation and causal mechanisms

Kurki (2007) says, "Causation has been one of the most contested concepts in the philosophy of science and social science. … key debates on causation have centred round (1) the meaning of the concept; (2) the reality of causes; and (3) the methods of causal analysis" (p. 362). In this section, I therefore summarise the concept of causation so far as critical realism is concerned.

First, for critical realists, causes are structural properties that produce or generate or create or determine or constrain something or some event (Sayer, 2000). Sometimes, as is usually the case, to cause may mean to enable something or lead to it. Hence, causes include "material resources, social structures, social rules and norms, discourses … 'reasons' that agents have for their actions" (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002, p. 54 and Kurki, 2007). As such, in CR, causation has little to do with the observed frequencies of event occurrences as positivists tend to assume (Sayer, 2000 and Danermark et al., 2002). Bergin, Wells and Owen (2008, p. 172) point out that causal analysis cannot depend on perception alone, "to be [and to cause] is not to be perceived [but] to be able to do". That is to say, causal analysis should demonstrate how the generative mechanisms actually enable observed phenomena to be what they are.

Second, critical realists also believe that causal mechanisms or processes are real (Kurki, 2007). They exist as forces or powers or potentials in the structure of objects that constitute systems. Power in a structure or in a person or in an object may be inactive or dormant (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2005). However, if it is activated or triggered, its effects may or may not be observed (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002; Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006 and Kurki, 2007). Particular mechanisms may produce different outcomes at different times just as the same outcomes may have different casual mechanisms (Danermark et al., 2002).

Third, causes and causal mechanisms in social life, according to CR, are often complex and unobservable (Kurki, 2007, p. 364). They exist deep in social structures, in the domain of the Real. However, we become aware of their existence by observing or experiencing their effects or absence of their effects. Causes are of many kinds and include thoughts, motives, attitudes, beliefs, discourses or power. Therefore, inference and more especially abduction and retroduction and counterfactual argumentation are useful mental operations in causal analysis from a critical realist perspective (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002; Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006 and Kurki, 2007). For example, in the natural world, magnetism causes iron filings to stick to each other. We observe them stick to each other but not the cause itself, magnetism (Danermark, 2002 and Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008). In the Christian theology, the Apostle Paul talks of the Spirit who generates effects in the form of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5, 22 – 23). We can notice acts of love, patience and temperance but not the cause. In Chapter Six, I use abductive inference to recontextualise, reinterpret and explicate casual links in the challenges that private higher education in Malawi faces. In Chapter Seven, I engage counterfactual thinking and retroductive reasoning to explore the underlying causes and causal mechanisms that generate and condition the constraints in private higher education in the research site.

In some cases it has been observed that a number of interacting causal mechanisms (complex causality) may collectively give rise to an event. For example, an electric lamp's light is a result of the structure of numerous factors "including glass, the gas, the filament, the wire, the switch, the plug, the electricity, as well as the finger that flicks the switch" (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006, p. 689). Thus, complex causality in CR is connected to robust explanation in which case to answer the question 'Why', it may be necessary to give information of the entire interacting underlying causal mechanisms, social structures and human agency that give rise to an event explaining the cause of a social event (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006, p. 689).

The conceptualization of causality in CR that I have outlined above informed my search for the causes of the challenges in the research site. I focused the search on social structures at micro, meso and macro levels like institutional, national and global practices; agential and organisational structures like the management committee, the Council and the Senate; the configuration of social relationships; and also on contextual factors (time, space, material resources, etc.).

For instance, the case institution had not had a Vice Chancellor for more than eight months when I conducted this study. The last Vice Chancellor was reported to have advised the university council of the impending expiry of his contract and that he did not intend to renew the contract. Therefore, it was necessary for the university council to begin to search for a successor. He said:

> *I told them to appoint a successor so that I could work with him or her and hand over smoothly. We advertised and I gave them names of qualified people. I have not got any feedback at all… And I don't blame anybody because when they were mooting to establish a university, not everyone in the committee understood what kind of an animal a university is* (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00).

However, the University Council had not started working on the matter until after the leader had gone. In this case, the cause of the challenge lay in governance practices. The institution does not have policies to guide governance practices. Thus, lack of action could not be assessed and evaluated based on any legal framework. It may also be due to the failure to find a successor in spite of attempts to do so. As Prowse (2010) says, CR seeks to analyse causal mechanisms through the effects that the causal mechanisms generate (p. 217).

4.1.3 Dimensions of knowledge

As I indicated earlier above, critical realists hold the view that reality exists independent of our knowledge. However, according to critical realism, there are two dimensions of our knowledge of reality, namely, the intransitive and the transitive. The knowledge, theories, perceptions and explanation about reality form the transitive whereas reality itself, comprising social structures, the causal mechanisms, powers and liabilities form the intransitive dimension (Danermark et al., 2002 and Prowse, 2010).

However, according to CR, the ideas, beliefs, theories or knowledge we hold about reality are fallible. They are subject to review, revision, or in some cases, outright rejection. However, reality itself remains the same in spite of the fallibility and imperfection of the knowledge we tend to hold about it (Sayer, 2000). As such, human beings cannot attain a complete understanding of reality. A gap (hiatus) exists between transitive (agency) and the intransitive (social structures). That is, our knowledge cannot exactly match the phenomena we attempt to describe (Byrne, 1998). It is an attempt to narrow this gap, to create a better understanding of the intransitive, that science (research), including this project, is about. However, the gap cannot be filled. Otherwise, that would be the end of learning. Hence, CR holds a relativist epistemology but not judgmental relativism (Danermark et al., 2002; Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2007 and Ayers, 2011).

It may be argued though, that if all the knowledge we hold about reality is fallible, what is the value of empirical research? Prowse (2010) remarks:

> All knowledge is predicated on *a priori* theoretical sensitization, but as knowledge is theory-dependent not theory-determined, empirical work is valid, not as a representation of truth but to improve theory … logic dictates criteria by which theories can be judged, and how research can inform practice (p. 218).

Thus, this study builds upon numerous previous and current research findings, theories, practical experiences and ideas that I hold about the reality of private higher education. Yet, in spite of the research findings, the theories and the ideas, the challenges in private higher education still exist. However, the theories, knowledge and the ideas helped me to gain a better understanding of private higher education and the challenges it faces. In this case, CR offered me a space to carry out this project and acknowledge the limitations of science. Additionally, CR made me aware that the information that research participants supplied to me and my personal experiences and ideas about private higher education were equally fallible. I needed to subject the data to strict scrutiny, evaluation and review (Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2007 and Ayers, 2011).

4.1.4 Agency and structure

Agency refers to "actors' choices, meanings, understandings, reasons, creative endeavors, intentions and motivations" (Houston, 2010, p. 75). By using the concept 'human agency', critical realists highlight the property of a human being that tends to be characterized by the capacity to set goals and trying to reach them. According to Hesketh and Fleetwood (2006, p. 685), society is made up of social structures (intentions, institutions, mechanisms, resources, rules, norms, conventions, habits, procedures, etc.) and the human agents who create and activate these structures. However, intentions tend to be caused by habits - "repetition of action and thought" - and/or deliberations (Hodgson, as quoted in Fleetwood, 2008, p. 188).

As I pointed out above, CR views human agents and structures as having powers, dispositions, capacities and potentials to cause certain things but not others. For example, human beings possess the power to walk but not to fly. Human beings are able to walk but not fly because of the structure of their bodies (biological, physiological) (Danermark et al., 2002 and Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006). Thus, CR tends to focus on the social structure in order to understand their inherent powers and liabilities (Kurki, 2007 and Prowse, 2010).

Human beings, according to Sayer (2000, p. 14), have emergent properties such as self-worth, self-consciousness, ability, personal and social identity. Thus, in engaging with the three orders of reality, namely, the organic (natural), work, and social relationships, human behaviour or agency tends to be regulated by hopes and fears of survival, approbation or disapprobation. In other words, human beings:

> do not just execute genetically pre-programmed tasks; they conceive these tasks first… the power of conception is of crucial importance here because it consists of the powers of imagination, ingenuity and creativity that conceived the Pyramids … the MIR space station …. these same powers … are also exercised in the conception of less grandiose endeavours such as finding better ways of producing a rivet, writing a programme or engaging in a telephone conversation (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006, p. 688).

Third, critical realists tend to believe that social structures are socially constructed. Structures cannot exist independent of agential actions and are mostly products of past and present human knowledge and actions. However, social structures have powers and causal mechanisms that may operate independently of their identification. In other words, although social structures are products of human beings, they may enable or constrain human practices or intentions (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002; Fleetwood, 2004; Kurki, 2007; Clark, MacIntyre & Cruickshank, 2007; Prowse, 2010 and Ayer, 2011).

In addition, for human agents to carry out their actions they require the pre-existing social structures to enable them to initiate actions. In the process of carrying out the actions they may reproduce, enhance or transform the structures. In other words, critical realists believe that society pre-exists agency. Therefore, human agents can transform society (Danermark et al., 2002 and Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006). Thus, Marx is quoted to have observed that:

> Men [sic] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past (Marx & Engels, as quoted in Ayer, 2011, p. 347).

However, although the social structures are products of acting people, people ascribe to social structures properties of their own, different from the properties of people. Thus, social structures can enable and limit the actions of the very human agents who created them (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 178). People formulate and enact laws or policies to regulate and control their social practices. Yet the laws or policies may end up being treated as though they were natural rather than social constructions. For example, in this study I observed that the Malawi government would not allow private agents to provide higher education until it had to review the University Education Act. In other words, the University Education Act was a causal mechanism in the social structure (Malawi government) that tended to hinder the liberalization of higher education (Malawi.PRSP, 2002, p. 35).

In addition, as agents interact with social structures, social structures tend to affect the behaviour and mental dispositions of agents in a process Hodgson refers to as "reconstitutive downward causation" (Hodgson, as quoted in Fleetwood, 2008, p. 187). That is, social structures tend to influence the way people perceive their needs; they tend to shape skills, intentions, capacities and preferences of agents.

However, to what extent social structures enable or constrain social action depends upon the nature of the relationship between social structures and the agents who draw upon the structures (Archer, as cited in Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006, pp. 692-693). Suffice to say, critical realists hold a view of a human being who is active, "not an automaton at the mercy of mechanisms but … actively transforms the social world and in turn is transformed by it" (Houston, 2010, p. 851). Sayer (2000, p. 97) puts it more clearly: "People as language-using, meaning-creating beings, are able to change themselves, their social relations and their environments, … ways of acting, relating and thinking that hold at a particular time". They carry out this 'agential enterprise' through the process of "reflective performance" (Archer, as cited in Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006, p. 692 and Callaghan, 2008). So, in carrying out this study, I was not only interested in observing the outcomes of the social practices but also collecting the understanding, interpretations and the meanings the constituent agents had in their practices. As Danermark et al., (2002) observed:

> Human society is an inherently meaningful world, and people form their practices and direct their activities in accordance with the varied significance they allocate to their world. The contents of everyday knowledge constitute the immediate mechanism behind the activities making up the social phenomena (p. 33).

Furthermore, human beings, according to Danermark et al. (2002, p. 16), make their own definitions, form their own concepts, have great capacity to change themselves as a result of new experiences and knowledge and generate continual changes. In view of the interplay between structure and agency, I explored the background to the emergence of private higher education in Malawi: how the research site institution was established, challenges that the institution faced in getting itself established and what had been done and was being done in dealing with the challenges and what the results of that have been (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.2). Thus, as a participant in this study, referring to private providers of higher education said:

> *Some have and others have not even come forward and say that that they have opened a university. So now, they are operating on their own and yet they have students there. So, control has been quite a challenge* (Interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h20).

That is to say, the social structure, namely the Malawi government, constrains the actions of some of the agents. However, the agents use agential powers inherent in them to offer higher education.

CR incorporates an emancipatory agenda. Researchers have an ethical obligation to deal with social structures or generative mechanisms whose effects tend to bring about undesirable consequences:

> Thus, if the social scientist discovers mechanisms that led to harmful effects – as, say, in the operation of the neoliberal economy – then there is an obligation, *ipso facto*, to expose those mechanisms for what they are. Not only that, the social scientist is duty bound to facilitate the conditions or contexts whereby emancipatory mechanisms can be activated (Houston, 2010, p. 76).

4.2 Implications for research methods, data analysis and causal explanation

Critical realism is a non-positivist meta-theory. That is, it clarifies what reality is, what and how we can know about it (Kurki, 2007 and Houston, 2010). In addition, it allows a scientist an opportunity “to appreciate the wide use of causal language in science and in everyday life” (Kurki, 2007, p. 368). In CR, causal analysis of social practices involves investigating outcomes of context, mechanisms, time, and human agency (Houston, 2010).

Therefore, a critical realist understanding of the social world - what we can know about it, and how we should think and act - had implications for my choice of methods, how I collected and analysed data and explained the causes of the challenges in private institutions of higher education in Malawi. It also had implications for the nature of interventions that were more likely to make private higher education perform better. In chapter Five, I discuss the design of the study, based on a critical realist understanding. In this section, I summarise the critical realist implications for this study.

4.2.1 Choice of research approach and methods

Danermark et al., (2002, p. 70) say that the nature of the object of study determines the kind of research methods and the type of knowledge claims one may have. In this research, the nature of the object of my study was social practices, that is, leadership and management. Hesketh & Fleetwood (2006, p. 689) observe that studying social practices requires qualitative data-collection and data analysis methods beyond the multiple analyses of variance. This is so because statistical investigation "cannot at all inform about causes, they cannot produce explanations… A cause is something totally different to [sic] statistical variance". Statistical correlation may serve to indicate the existence of a cause but not the cause itself (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 54).

Therefore, I decided to take an intensive study approach using a case study design. I utilised the two strategies to focus on generative mechanisms which underlie the challenges that private higher education in Malawi faces. As Danermark et al. (2002, p. 166) point out, "mechanisms do not appear at random and unsystematically". I elaborate on the two strategies in Chapter Five.

4.2.2 Research methods

I pointed out above, in Section 4.1.4 that critical realists tend to view the social world as a meaningful world in which agents utilizing emergent agential properties, engage social structures so as to achieve their goals. As causal mechanisms get activated and actualized, events may occur or fail to occur (Danermark et al., 2002 and Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012). The events may be in the form of challenges or interventions that are implemented to deal with the challenges. Therefore, in order to understand the nature of the challenges and their effects so that I could explore the underlying causes of the challenges, I collected data using narrative interviews, archival document content analysis and observation methods. I discuss the methods in Chapter Five.

4.2.3 Data analysis and causal explanation

In Section 4.2.1 above, I pointed out that critical realists tend to believe that quantitative data analysis methods may not adequately inform us of the underlying causes of events (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002 and Kurki, 2007). The view that social reality is differentiated and stratified influenced me to use qualitative data analysis methods. Such methods could enable me to identify underlying causes in social structures in different social and natural systems. Thus, causal explanation in critical realism of necessity has to be robust and as far as possible, address complex causality of phenomena (Danermark et al., 2002 and Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012). As I discuss in Chapter Five, I engaged in a three-phase data analysis: induction, in which case I identified emerging themes; theoretical reinterpretation of themes through abductive reasoning in Chapter Six, and lastly, retroduction in Chapter Seven. I present a causal explanation of the challenges in private higher education in Chapter Seven. Fig 5 below captures the study process.

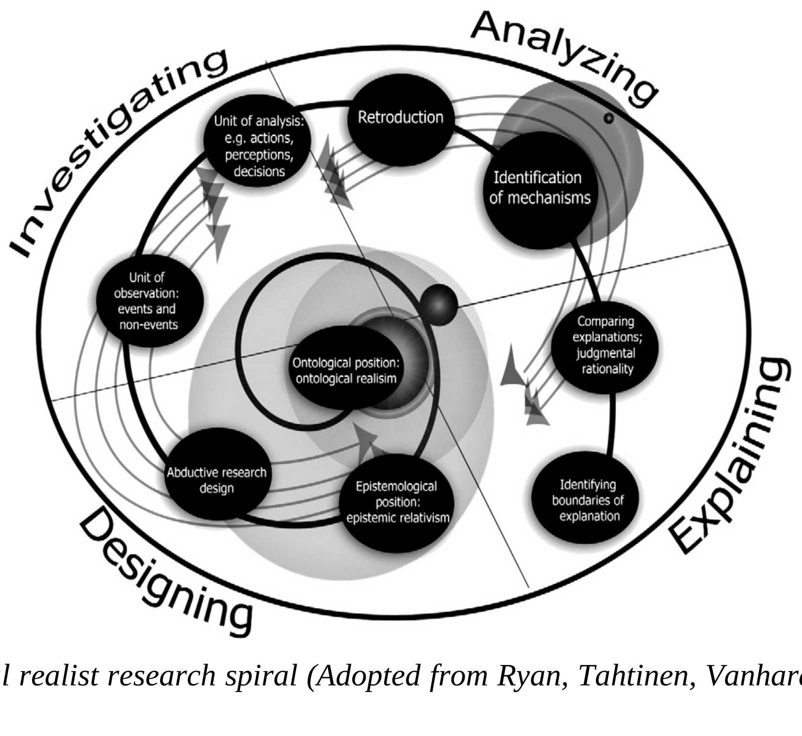

Fig. 5. A critical realist research spiral (Adopted from Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012, p. 303)

4.3 Limitations of critical realism

Prowse (2010, p. 217) highlighted three limitations of CR. First, CR is silent on the issue of method. Hence, in this study I handled the limitation by utilising methods that I considered relevant for the study. Danermark et al. (2002) advises, "the choice of methods should be governed, on the one hand by what we want to know, and on the other by what we can learn with the help of different methods" (p. 204).

Second, CR lacks clarity on how different research methods can be combined and sequenced. In this study, I utilised and adapted the model by Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta and Mainela (2012, pp. 302 – 303) (refer to Chapter Five). Brown, Slater and Spence (2002) criticize CR because "Overriding emphasis is given to the 'abstract' stage of science, namely the movement from the apparent to the real" through abstraction but it does not give the researcher the tools for combining the abstractions into the concrete practice (p. 776). In this study, I used complexity and transformational leadership theories to enable me to move from theoretical understanding to the concrete study of phenomena through inductive and abductive inferences.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter I presented critical realism as a philosophy that underpinned my understanding of reality and what I can know about it and also how I can act with that knowledge of it. I briefly discussed a critical realist understanding of cause, agency, social structure and the relationship between agency and structure. In addition, I highlighted the implications of critical realism as a research approach and design and the possible outcomes. In the next chapter, I present a more detailed account of the design of this study as informed by a critical realist understanding of research in the social sciences.

Chapter Five

Research approach and design

> *Critical realist conceptualization of such structures is not static, but changing based on continuous human agency…. As a result, critical realist methods have distinctive advantages in studying processes over time, in comparison to static positivistic conceptualizations which regard industrial networks as governed by law-like regularities* (Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012, p. 300).

5.1 Introduction

In chapter Four I stated that this study was underpinned by critical realist assumptions about reality, what can be known about it and how we can know it. I also presented critical realist implications for the research approach and design. Now, this chapter deals with (a) research design; (b) data-gathering processes and techniques; (c) analysis of data; (d) interpretation of data; (e) credibility of findings; (f) transferability of findings; (g) my role in the study; (h) ethics; and (i) presentation of study findings. I discuss these issues in the sections that follow in this chapter.

5.2 Study approach

I carried out this study using an intensive approach (Thomas, 2011; Danermark et al., 2002 and Sayer, 2000). This is because an intensive approach tends to enable a scientist to carry out an in-depth investigation into the perceptions, thoughts, reasons, motives, ideas and meanings that agents give to their actions and/or the action of others. The approach tends to allow a researcher to obtain information about the events in agents' own words, and observe agents as they reproduce and/or enact and transform social structures (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002 and Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006). That is, an intensive approach enables a scientist to focus on qualitative properties of human agents thereby producing thick description of social practices.

5.3 Research design

The goals of this study were to identify and explain underlying causal mechanisms of the challenges that private higher education in Malawi face and to explore ways that would more likely enable private higher education in Malawi to be more sustainable. I stated in Chapter Four, Section 4.2.1 that causal mechanisms tend to depend on the context to generate events and that they tend to exist in different systems in society (Danermark et al., 2002 and Houston, 2010). Therefore, I considered a case study design to be appropriate for this research. Let me briefly discuss what a case study is and how it was appropriate for this study.

5.3.1 Case study

Gilliam (in Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard, 2007, p. 1310) says a case is a “unit of human activity embedded in the real world”. The unit of human activity in this study was an institution that offers private higher education. As a unit of activity in the real world, a case affords a holistic, non-reductionist approach to the study of phenomena. In addition, Luck, Jackson & Usher (in Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard, 2007, p. 1310) observe that a case study is a “bridge across paradigms”. It tends to enable a researcher to utilise different methods so as to gain an in-depth understanding of human knowledge and practices. As a result, using a case study tends to enable exploration of causal links and patterns of relationships in social practices. In other words, “Investigating how a mechanism works in a concrete situation involves tracing the causal powers and describing the interaction between the powers that producs a social phenomenon” (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 166). Hence case study research, always situated in the ‘concrete’, is a highly appropriate method for critical realist research.

This was particularly important given the observation that Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel (2005, p. 671) make concerning organisations: “A complex system is not constituted merely by the sum of its components, but also by the intricate relationships between these components”. A case study is valued for offering a researcher an opportunity “to understand the whole case in the totality of the environment” (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 455). I needed a design that would enable me to study and understand events that occur naturally and dynamically. A case study enabled me to meet the need.

Sharp, Mobley, Hammond, Withington, Drew, Springfield & Stipanovic (2012), Levy (2008), Seawright & Gerring (2008) and Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard, (2007, p. 1310) describe different types of case studies and case study designs. However, as Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard (2007) observe, it is practically difficult to draw a line between the types of case studies. The issue is really about the purpose that one has for the study. In my case, my purpose was to surface and understand the generative mechanisms that tend to produce the challenges in private higher education in Malawi. I chose and utilised an instrumental case study design as defined by Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010, p. 455).

An instrumental case study "represents some other issue under investigation and the researcher believes this particular case can help provide insights or help to understand that issue. The case is illustrative of something under investigation" (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 455). Since one of my goals in this study was to explore ways that were more likely to enable private higher education to perform better, I considered a case study design to be suitable. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) observe that:

> Case studies are 'a step to action'. They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use; for staff or individual self-development, for within-institutional feedback; for formative evaluation; and in educational policy-making (p. 256).

I was aware of the criticisms that some scientists have expressed of case studies in respect of rigour and the researcher's inability to generalization (Danermark et al., 2002; 2006; Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard, 2007; 2009; Gilbert & Ruigrok, 2010 and Sharp et al., 2012). However, the criticisms have been challenged by many scholars (for example, Sharp et al., 2012); Gilbert & Ruigrok, 2010; Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard, 2007; Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010 and Danermark et al. (2002). Nevertheless, I deal with these issues in other sections below.

5.3.2 Selection of the research site

In terms of deciding on a research site for the study Danermark et al. (2002, p. 167) observe that purposefully chosen case studies are an important feature of social science research that is based on CR assumptions. I therefore decided to carry out the study in one of the three oldest accredited Christian PIHEs that offered full-time, contact tuition. By oldest, I mean an institution that had held at least one graduation ceremony. I assumed that such an institution had so established itself that it would be in existence by the time I finished this project. The Director of Higher Education (Interviewed on September 21, 2011, at 14h00), for example remarked, *"There have been so-called universities in this country which are here today. Tomorrow, they're nowhere to be seen!"* Indeed, there had been such institutions in Malawi. It was this observation that influenced me to carry out the study in a credited institution.

Of the three, the Vice Chancellor of one institution refused to grant me permission to carry out the study. He had already expressed some reservations when I went to meet with him and although I presented to him a letter of introduction from my supervisor and a student ID card, he required that I submit my research proposal. He would respond to my request after he had understood what it was that I intended to do. About four weeks later, he sent me the following e-mail:

Dear Kadyakapita

> *I am sorry that I did not communicate to you that the University authorities could not release all the information and the people that you requested, except the information that is put in the papers periodically for the public consumption. That information you can access through the usual dailies* (E-mail dated 09/09/2011).

Consequently, I decided to carry out the study in one of a Christian PIHEs that I could access more easily at less financial cost. I needed to use public means of transport because fuel was scarce in Malawi during the time I embarked on data collection. Also, I considered the issue of availability of funds and time (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 456).

5.3.2.1 Description of the research site

The research site is a private institution of higher education. Its survival partly depends on its reputation. As such, my description of the site will be as general as far as is possible in an attempt to hide its identity and maintain anonymity (Tracy (2011). In Section 5.4 Ethical issues, I discuss the challenge of maintaining anonymity in qualitative research.

5.3.2.1.1 Historical background

The institution was established in 1979 and opened in 1980 as a seminary and a lay training centre by a Christian church organisation for the training of reverends (pastors) and lay church leaders. It offered two-year, fulltime in-contact courses leading to an award of a diploma in ministerial (pastoral) studies and two-month part-time in-contact courses leading to a certificate lay pastor studies (Graduation Programme, 10 – 12 July, 2009, p. 8 and Student Information Handbook, 2010, p. 1). It is located in a rural area. The nearest town in which are shops, banks, hospital and other social services is almost thirty kilometres away.

It opened as a four-year degree-granting college, headed by a principal, in 2004 on January 12, 2004 with seventeen fulltime, in-contact students, two fulltime teachers who also comprised the management team and nine non-teaching staff (Statistical Report, September 16, 2005). When the school year closed on October 29, 2004, enrolment had increased to 85 (57 in the degree programme, 13 in the ministerial diploma and 15 in the lay pastor programmes) (Footprints, 2004 and Minute 93 of Management Board Meeting of September 12, 2003). In 2007, the institution affiliated with a chartered university in Kenya. The kind of relationship between the two institutions is such that the research site offers courses from the institution in Kenya. Upon satisfactory completion of the courses, the institution is in Kenya awards the degree (Affiliation Agreement Document, 2007).

It was re-organised and restructured in 2008. The restructuring involved the establishment of a University Council, renaming the institution as a university, appointment of top management team comprising a fulltime Vice Chancellor; Dean of Student Affairs; Director of Physical Planning, Development and Public Relations; Registrar; and a Business Manager (bursar). In addition, academic departments were restructured and head of departments appointed. One of the senior staff houses was turned into a university office (Brief Report to the Council by the Vice Chancellor, no date).

In 2009, the Government of Malawi approved the recommendation of the Credentials Evaluation Committee that the institution be recognised as a tuition provider of the university with which it is affiliated (Letter dated 14th January, 2010, Reference No. HRP&D/POL/4). It held its first graduation ceremony for the degree programme on 12th July, 2009. Thirty-two students were awarded bachelor's degrees: twenty in business studies, five in secondary education and seven in theology (Graduation Programme, 10 – 12 July 2009, pp. 12 - 13)

5.3.2.1.2 Governance

From 2004 to early 2008, the institution was governed by a College Management Board, comprising mostly heads of the church's regional headquarters and leaders in the national headquarters and two lay persons who were appointed by members of the Executive Committee of the church. In 2008, in the process of restructuring, the Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the church instituted a University Council (the Council) consisting of nine including the chairperson, the Secretary General, the Treasurer of the church, the Business Manager and four lay members (Brief Report to the Council by the Vice Chancellor, no date). The head of the church, who is also the Chancellor, chairs the Council while the Vice Chancellor serves as the secretary of the Council (Working Policy, BA 55 15 of 201, pp. 91 – 92). None of the staff or students of the institution is a member of the Council.

Members of the Council serve for a term of five years. They may be re-elected if the church members see it fit. The Council meets twice in a year and is chaired by the leader of the church in Malawi (Working Policy, BA 55 15 of 201, pp. 91 – 92).

By the time I submitted this report, the institution was being governed using the church policy (Working Policy). It had not produced its own policy documents to guide leadership and management or the governance of the institution. As such, management and governance practices were informed by the decisions arrived in the University Council and/or Administrative Committee (AdCom) meetings. I discuss the challenges that are posed by such an arrangement in Section 7.6.2 and 7.6.3.

5.3.2.1.3 Funding

From 1980 to 2003, the operation and capital development of institution was funded by the proprietor. Possibly due to the fact that all the students were individual who were training to be church leaders (reverends). However, when it was upgraded to a college, the programmes diversified, and the institution admitted to study different fields, the proprietor significantly reduced funding from about one hundred percent to about less than nine per cent (Operation

Budget, 2011). The institution has had to fund and finance both its operations and capital development mostly from its resources in the form of fees, income from different industries and development aid from private donors Operation Budget, 2012 - 2013) (refer to Section 6.4.3.2).

5.3.2.1.4 Leadership and management structures

The institution is managed by a top management team headed by the Vice Chancellor. The team consists of the Vice Chancellor (VC), the Business Manager (chief finance officer), the Dean of Students and the Registrar. The VC heads both the administration and the academic branches of the institution. In the academic branch, the VC directly supervises Heads of Academic Departments and the Librarian. In the administrative branch, the VC directly supervises the Dean of Student Affairs, the Business Manager and the Registrar. Heads of Academic Departments supervise teachers, whereas the Dean of Student Affairs supervise Wardens in student residences and students through the President of Students' Representative Council. The Business Manager supervises the Chief Accountant and the Human Resource Officer who supervises heads of non-academic departments.

The VC chairs the Administrative Committee (AdCom) and the University Senate. By the time I submitted this report, the position of Vice Chancellor had been vacant since January, 2012 (refer to Section 6.4.2.1.1). It has not had a deputy vice chancellor since its opening in 2004 although the position has been provided for in the annual budget (Financial statement, October 31, 2012 and 2011).

5.3.2.1.5 Infrastructure

By the time the institution opened, the teaching-learning area comprised one two-classroom block, eight houses for married students and eight duplexes for single students. Ever since 2004, both the married students' and the single students' houses have been used to accommodate single students. After the construction of a women's residence, the houses accommodate only male students. Married students who desire to live with their spouses live in rent houses in the villages.

Later on, a chapel and a four-roomed office block which also housed a library with a seating capacity of thirty users were built. In addition there were two academic and one non-academic staff houses. A multipurpose hall, built in 2003, was opened in 2004. It consists of an auditorium and five rooms. The auditorium is used for worship services as well as other social gatherings. One of the rooms is used as a kitchen for the preparation of resident students' meals. Students collect their meals and eat outside in the open or in their residence rooms. Of the remaining four rooms, three are used as classrooms and one as a computer laboratory.

By December 2012, latest additions were a 114-bed women's residence hall; a flat for wardens; a building with six rooms five of which are used as offices for faculty members and the sixth is used as a classroom a; a library extension with a seating capacity of over one hundred users; three-room classroom block in which one of the rooms is used as an Internet laboratory; a work shop; ten senior staff and one junior staff houses; and five motor vehicles (a sixty-seater bus, a three-tonner lorry, a 1.5-ton pickup, a half-tonner pickup and an eight-seater Toyota Land Cruiser (Observation and Financial statement, October 31, 2012 and 2011).

The institution is connected to main electricity supply lines. It depends on three deep wells and a single shallow well for water supply. It has two computer laboratories with a combined total of thirty-four computers. One of the laboratories, with twenty-eight computers, is mostly used to access the Internet (Observation). However, Internet connectivity is a challenge (refer to Section 6.4.3.1.6).

5.3.2.1.6 Academic programmes, enrolment and staffing

5.3.2.1.6.1 Academic programmes

The institution offers bachelor of arts courses leading to an award of a bachelor of business administration with concentration in financial accounting, business management, agri-business and marketing; bachelor of education (secondary) with concentration in English (language and literature), religion, business studies and agriculture, and bachelor of arts with concentration in theology. It also offers certificate courses leading to an award of a certificate in lay pastor. It discontinued courses leading to an award of a ministerial diploma. The courses are offered in three departments, headed by a head of department: Business studies, Education and Theology and religious studies (Report to the Council, 9th December, 2012). The heads of departments are directly supervised by the Vice Chancellor.

5.3.2.1.6.2 Enrolment

There are three hundred and thirty-five fulltime students: one hundred and twenty-eight in the business, twenty-six in education and fourteen in theology and religious studies departments respectively. Of these, two hundred and three are resident. One hundred and sixty-seven are women (2012/2013 Semester 1 Registered Students). As it can be observed in Table 2, the institution has the largest enrolment – about seventy per cent - and staffing - about fifty-five per cent, excluding adjunct teachers – in business studies (refer to Section 2.10.2).

Programme	Male	Female	Total
Business studies	128	107	235
Education	26	60	86
Theology	14	0	14
Total	168	167	335

Table 2. Enrolment (Source: 2012/2013 Semester 1 registered students)

5.3.2.1.6.3 Staffing

There are seventy-four fulltime employees. Of these, eleven are teachers. The Business studies department has six teachers while the Education and Theology departments have two and three respectively. There is one professor, one with PhD degree, nine with a master's degree and one with a bachelor's degree. In addition, fourteen adjunct lecturers teach some of the courses (Financial statement, October 31, 2012 and 2011). Table 3 below summarises the data.

Qualification	No. of staff
Professor	**1**
Doctoral	**1**
Master’s	**14**
Bachelor	**10**
University diploma/Associate degree	**1**
Secondary education	**22**
Below secondary education	**25**
Total	**74**

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Table 3. Total personnel and qualification (Source: Financial statement, October 31, 2012 and 2011)

5.3.3 Data collection methods

Danermark et al. (2002) says that critical realism has not developed a research method. Rather, critical realists advocate the use of different methods in the collection of data, a practice that is referred to as “methodological pluralism” (p. 73). In this study, I was influenced by the observation that Maxwell (2005) made concerning creativity in collecting data. He said:

> Qualitative data are not restricted to the results of specified ‘methods’ … you are the research instrument … your eyes and ears are the tools you use to make sense of what is going on … you should always include whatever informal data gathering strategies are feasible, including ‘hanging out’, casual conversations and incidental observations (Maxwell, as cited in Quinn, 2006, p. 67).

I used three methods to collect data, namely interviews, document content analysis and observation. In using three methods I intended to increase the credibility of the data. In addition, I also wanted methods to compensate for each other’s limitations (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). Table 4 below gives a synopsis of the research methods that I utilised.

Method	Goal(s)	Type of data collected	Sources
Document content analysis	To access and collect data in documented official information	Historical data on the vision, mission and establishment of the institution; Malawi government accreditation processes; Formal communication between the institution and its stakeholders including proprietor; Financial information; Staff and faculty records; Enrolment; Nature of issues discussed in management and governance meetings; Major events; Interpersonal relationships between management and staff, faculty, and proprietors.	Brochure; Financial statements and annual budgets; Graduation programmes; Letters; Minutes of management and University Council meetings; Newsletters; Reports to University Council and proprietor; Student's Handbook; Visitor's book. Working Policy
Interviews	To access and understand agents' ideas, motives, intentions, thoughts, experiences, meanings, views on events and practices in the institution.	Perceptions about the challenges facing the institution, staff and faculty; Effects of challenges on personal and work experiences; Motives for operating the institution; working in the institution; Events that occur in the institution and significance/implications of the events.	Proprietors; MoEST officials; Top managers; Registrars; Learners; Staff; Faculty members; Heads of academic departments; Members of students' Representative Councils; Contractors.
Observation	To understand interactional behaviour of agents in their natural setting and to corroborate, substantiate, triangulate data from other sources	Quality and use of facilities, infrastructure, and physical plants; Availability and use of human and nonhuman resources; Decision-making processes; Social interaction patterns.	Classrooms; Cafeteria; Library; Computer laboratories; Grounds and lawns; Roads; On-campus and off-campus learners' residences; Staff and faculty residences; Meetings; Ceremonies; Personal interactions and conversations.

Table 5: Methods, goals, and sources of data

5.3.3.1 Interview method

I indicated in paragraph Chapter Four, Section 4.2.6 a critical realists tend to believe that human agents have intentions, motives and reasons for what they do. In addition, agents tend to attach meanings and significance to their practices. Therefore, according to Danermark et al. (2002, p. 194) "In explaining social phenomena we must always consider what people think and believe

… consider their ideas". The ideas, the beliefs and meanings that people hold may be false but as Danermark et al. (2002, p. 36) say, they are real because they motivate people to act in a certain way. One of the methods I utilised for data collection was interviews.

Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, (2010, p. 438) and Nunkoosing (2005, p. 698) said that the interview is the most widely used and basic method for obtaining data in qualitative research. The interview is

> the best way to get into the lived experience of a person who has experienced an important issue…is to enable the person to narrate that experience…. The interview invites and persuades individuals to think and to talk – that is, to discourse – their needs, wants, expectations, experiences, and understandings at both the conscious and unconscious levels (Nunkoosing, 2005, p. 699).

I used interviews to understand practices and events that occur in the research site and how the participants experience and respond to them. For example, I wanted to know how the institution came into existence; why the proprietors decided to operate the institution; the challenges that the MoEST experiences in managing private higher education and what was being done to deal with the challenges. Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, (2010, p. 438) observed that an interview helps a researcher obtain information that cannot be obtained from observation or document analysis.
I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews using an interview schedule that I had prepared before the interview session (Appendix A). I adjusted some of the questions relative to the category of the participants. All the interviews were face-to-face. As Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury (2012) observe, face-to-face interviews, unlike telephone interviews tend to provide a researcher with contextual naturalness and opportunities for building rapport (pp. 3 - 4).

I sought permission from each participant to audio tape the interview. Tape recording freed me from getting distracted from the flow of the interview or from missing some salient points in the process of writing. However, two participants refused to be tape recorded. In these cases I took notes and summarised the notes later on after the interview was over. I noted down in a notebook some points that needed clarification or elaboration. Where I needed clarification, elaboration, and/or reconciliation with data from other sources, I sought another appointment for the matter. This was the case with Head 1, Supervisor, VC, Director of Finance, Learner 1, Librarian and Dean of Student Affairs. That is, I held more than one interview with each of them to clarify, elaborate and/or corroborate data. After I had transcribed the interview I sent a copy of the transcription to the participant to check if I had correctly recorded what was said.

I was aware of the limitations of the interviews. Nunkoosing (2005, p. 701) observes that "an interviewee can choose whatever means is available to him or her to construct his or her story". That is, information that interviewees give tends to be a reconstruction and an interpretation of reality from their own point of view. I dealt with this challenge by using a number of techniques including probing. I also asked the participants to give details, examples and substantiate their responses when it was necessary. Besides, I collected data from more than one participant so as to have multiple and various perspectives on the issues under discussion. Furthermore, I used two other methods in addition to the interview: document analysis and observation as described below.

5.3.3.2 Selection of research participants

As a research paradigm, complexity theory cautions against marginalising or dispensing with what is apparently trivial or inexplicable. Mason (2009) says what may appear to be marginal may well be part of the complexity of a system, and may be a constituent of the critical level above which emergent properties and behaviours may be possible (p. 119). Although Mason (2009) possibly gave the advice in respect of data, I applied as a selection strategy for participants. I considered diversity and heterogeneity so as to collect data that provides diverse perspectives of the research problem. Furthermore, Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010) observe that qualitative-intensive-researchers are purposeful in how they select research participants. That is, they choose the participants who are more likely to have appropriate information, insight, understanding and knowledge of the phenomena that are being studied (pp. 428 – 429). Experiences, meanings that agents attach to their experience, interpretations of and responses to the experiences constitute part of the empirical domain (Danermark et al., 2002) and are sources of relevant data (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 438).

In case of students, I selected participants who had lived in the institution for at least seven out of the eight semesters. I assumed that through their long stay in the institution they would have acquired, had been exposed and possibly responded to various types of experiences. Among faculty and non-teaching staff, I selected individuals who had been worked in the institution for at least five years. I also based my selection on the role that they played in and outside the institution.

In addition, I selected four members of the top Management Board, two of the proprietors in the sponsoring organisation, and a senior officer in the Directorate of Higher Education in MoEST. In total I invited twenty-one people to participate in the study. I give a comprehensive list in Section 5.3.4.1.1 below.

I was aware that the knowledge, experiences and beliefs of the participants were fallible. Therefore, I compared and contrasted the data that I collected with the data from documents and participant and non-participant observations so as to make the data more credible through triangulation.

5.3.3.3 Research participants

I interviewed the following participants: a senior officer in the Directorate of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; two of the proprietors of the institution (the research site); five members of the top management team; one member in the chaplaincy department; a library staff member ; two heads of academic department; three fulltime teachers; two learners who were in their final year; one member of the Executive Committee of Learners' Representative Council; two administrative officers; two members of non-academic staff: one in the cafeteria and one in the institution's industries and a member of staff in a donor agency in the institution. In Table 6 below, I show the codes that I assigned the participants (Table 6). I used the official positions rather than personal names to protect their identities.

Participant	**Code**	**Role**
Academic department officers	Head 1 Head 2	Head of academic department
Accounts staff	Director of	Manage the finances of the institution

	Finance (DoF)	
Administrative staff	Assistant 1 Assistant 2	Process student admissions and records
Cafeteria staff	Cook	Prepare and serve meals to learners
Chaplaincy staff	Chaplain	Provide spiritual, counseling and spiritual services to members of the institution
Staff in office of Learners' Affairs	Dean	Supervise students in the institution
Officer in the Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Director	Coordinate and direct higher education in MoEST
Staff in the university industries	Supervisor	Work in the university industries
Staff in the maintenance department	Volunteer	Develop infrastructure in the institution
Students	Student 1 Student 2	Fulltime, in-contact learning in the institution
Library staff	Librarian	Provide library services to members of the institution
Member of LRC	Councilor	Represent learners in the institution
Proprietor of the institution	Proprietor 1 Proprietor 2	Sponsor and govern the institution
Member of the teaching staff	Teacher 1 Teacher 2 Teacher 3	Teach courses in the academic departments of the institution
Staff in the office of the Chief Executive Officer	VC	Head the institution

Table 6: Coding scheme of research participants

5.3.3.2 Archival document content analysis method

I obtained some of the data by analyzing the contents of official archival documents that I were made available to me. My purpose for accessing archival documents was to collect additional information in relation to the goals of the study (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 452). Therefore, from the documents I sought to understand the mission and vision of the institution, its development, patterns and nature of social relationships that exist among the constituent agents of the institution and agents in the external environment, events that had taken place and the challenges that the institution faced as recorded in the documents. May (as cited in Quinn, 2006, p. 75) is quoted to have said:

> Documents, read as the sedimentation of social practices, have the potential to inform and structure the decisions which people make on a daily and longer-term basis; … They tell us about the aspirations and intentions of the periods to which they refer and describe places and social relationships at a time when we may not have been born, or were simply not present.

That is to say, documents contain information concerning the practices of actors who may not be present at the time of data gathering. The information is used in decision-making. In addition, the information also reflects the desires that the actors had/have at a particular point in time. Bowen (2009) observes that documents "can provide data on the context within which research participants operate" (p. 28). Consequently, I considered the contents of archival documents to be sources of data for the study. Furthermore, document analysis served the purpose of triangulation of the interview and observation data.

From the documents I extracted data on the history of the institution; its encounters with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Office of President and Cabinet, the Department of Human Resource Development and Planning as it sought accreditation; academic programmes that the institution offers; the nature of social relationships that exist within the institution and between the institution and proprietor and development partners; funding, the challenges that the institution faces, enrolment, and number of academic and non-academic staff. In some cases, I used data from documents to triangulate and corroborate data from other sources, substantiate and/or reinterpret phenomena of interest in the study.

For instance, one of the participants in the interview told me that the institution was accredited by the Malawi Government. However, in the document analysis I observed that the institution was accredited as a tuition provider of the academic programmes of the university with which the institution is affiliated (Letter dated January 14, 2010, Reference No. HRP&D/POL/4).

Archival document content analysis therefore helped me corroborate data and triangulate data from other methods.

I collected data only from official, “text-based artifacts” (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 443). The research site had not accumulated many documents that were relevant for the study. Nevertheless, the documents that I had access were:

- letters,
- management reports such as financial statements and auditors’ reports,
- operation budgets,
- a visitors’ book,
- a Student Information Handbook,
- a physical development master plan,
- graduation programmes,
- a University magazine: Souvenir edition,
- a brochure,
- Working Policy book,
- minutes of the Administrative Committee, and of the University Council (Council) and
- the Affiliation Agreement Document.

However, Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, (2010) warn, “Documents do not always provide an accurate account of events or settings”. They argue that documents are not written for researchers. They are “incomplete and unrepresentative” (p. 443). I held a critical stance towards the contents of the documents, and ignored information that I considered to be purely for ideological or for marketing purposes. I utilised an additional method to collect data: Observation. I describe the method below.

5.3.3.3 Observation

I collected some of the data for the study through observation. Table 7 shows the nature of data that I collected. Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010, p. 433) say that observation exists in a continuum, ranging from a complete observer to a complete participant. In my case, I was in between the two extremes. I was a participant observer in that for more than five years I worked in the institution as a teacher and head. In addition, although I had left the institution, I was one of the members of the University Council when I carried out the study. I was aware that being a participant observer poses problems in qualitative research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). I discuss the issue of insider researcher in Section 5.5.

Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010, pp. 434 and 435) warned of three challenges in using observation as a method for collecting research data: Observer effect, Observer expectation and Observer bias. In observer effect, the participants may change their behaviour when they are aware that they are being observed or they may be untruthful, whereas in observer expectation, the observer knows the characteristics of the participants and, therefore, expect them. In observer bias, the attitude and values of the observer affect the observation and/or interpretation of the observation. The focus of the study was on the challenges that the institution faces, not necessarily the behaviours of the participants. As such, my presence on the site was less likely to affect the way in which people behaved or carried out their duties.

As a member of the institution's council, I attended meetings. From the time I got permission from Rhodes University to start collecting data and the time I got official access into the research site (see the Appendix section, pp. 268 - 269), I attended three council meetings. I took the advantage of such occasions to understand the interaction patterns among the council members; the atmosphere that tended to prevail in the committee room; the issues that the council discussed; how, in some cases, the university officers and/or the proprietors responded to the issues; and the nature of issues that tended to receive more attention.

I also drew on my experiences and knowledge from working in the institution, my interaction with some of the members of the institution and the proprietors at different levels in sponsoring the organisation. I also drew on the experience I obtained from interacting with officials in the MoEST and the Department of Human Resource Planning and Development, and Ministry of Water Development both before and during the research process. In addition, I kept supplementing the notes each time I visited the campus for research interviews, council meetings and graduation exercises. As Maxwell said, a researcher is an "instrument":

> Qualitative data are not restricted to the results of specified 'methods' … you *are* the research instrument … your eyes and ears are the tools you use to make sense of what is going on … you should always include whatever informal data-gathering strategies are

feasible, including ‘hanging out’, casual conversations, and incidental observations (Maxwell, quoted in Quinn, 2006, p. 67).

In the first formal phase of data collection, I intended to gain an understanding of the research site and what its physical appearance tends to communicate to an outsider. I focused on the quality, state of repair, quantity, and location of central administration and staff offices; instruction rooms and library in the teaching-learning area; staff and students’ residences; recreation facilities (sports grounds, hall, etc.), general appearance of the campus including grounds and lawns; storage of movable materials (mostly classroom furniture and motor vehicles). I visited some of the classrooms, entered offices, some of the students’ residences, the library, the chapel, and the multipurpose hall and recorded observations that I made in my journal. I reflected on the notes and interpreted them. In this phase, I spent three days because I also arranged to carry out two interviews.

The second trip focused on gaining an understanding of the challenges that some of the research participants cited in the interview. I sought to collect evidences of what was said, if there were any evidences. For example, in the interview, some of the participants told me that the Internet had not been working; that students vandalised the property of the institution; that there was congestion in the residences for male students; that some of the students who lived in rented houses in the village were cohabiting; and that some students wasted food. Therefore, I visited the research site and some of the houses which the students rented, took notes on my observations and, in some cases, discussions that I had with the people. In this phase, I spent two days. This was so because in some cases, I wanted to experience some of the challenges that the some of the participants raised. For instance, some of the non-resident participants cited the challenges that they faced walking to/from the village at night, and life in the village. I wanted to experience and observe the allegations.

Date	**Purpose of visit**	**Observation**
October 4 - 6, 2011	Familiarize myself with the research site and to conduct	Quality, availability and number of on-campus staff and students’ residences, classrooms,

	research interview with Head 1 and 2	laboratories, offices, cafeteria, recreation facilities, grounds and lawns, general upkeep and state of repair; observe staff students' interaction patterns, prevailing mood and attitude toward an outsider;
April 26 and 27, 2012	Validate interview data	Condition of and use of residences, teaching and learning facilities and resources; living conditions of resident students in residences; observe how resident students collect and take food; visit some of students' homes in the village (entered two houses whose occupants were present); interview a land lord on their relationships with and the behaviour of their tenants (students); experience what it means to travel to/from the village to school at night; observe how students spend free day in weekend;

Table 8: Observation

5.3.4 Data analysis and causal explanation

Maxwell (in Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen, 2010, p. 481) observes:

> The experienced qualitative researcher begins data analysis immediately after finishing the first interview or observation, and continues to analyse the data as long as he or she is working on the research, stopping briefly to write reports and papers.

I analysed data in three phases. I embarked on the first phase as soon as I had collected data. In this phase, I had two goals. The first was to identify emergent themes from the data in relation to the research goals. I mostly used inductive inference to identify themes. Secondly in this phase, I also scrutinized the data to isolate issues that lacked clarity and/or elaboration. When I identified such cases, I returned to the participant to obtain clarification and/or elaboration.

In the second phase, I compared and contrasted the themes that emerged in the first phase. I synthesized themes that were related into a single theme and assigned it a name that best captured what the theme was about. Thereafter, I reinterpreted and recontextualised the themes as they emerged in the data through abductive inference. I used complexity and transformational leadership theories as heuristic devices. In this phase, my goal was to explicate causal links and relationships in the challenges in the research site. Thus, the second phase constituted the major content of Chapter Six, Section 6.3. Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010, p. 481) observe:

> All qualitative analysis involves attempts to comprehend the phenomenon under study, synthesise information and explain relationships, theorise about how and why the relationships appear as they do, and reconnect the new knowledge with what is already known.

In the last phase, I engaged in retroduction. In critical realism, retroduction involves movement from "a description of something that produces it or is a condition for it" by answering transcendental questions like "What must be the case in order for events to occur as they do?" (Houston, 2010, pp. 82 - 83). In this study, it meant interrogating the challenges that the research site faced so as to identify the causal mechanisms that tended to generate the challenges.

Causal mechanisms, according to CR, are unobservable. However, we can notice their effects (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 58 and Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008, p. 172). Retroduction as Houston (2010, p. 83) suggests, involves moving backward from the effects to the causes to identification of mechanisms. As Bhaskar (Houston, 2010, p. 83) observes, mechanisms are "not unknowable, although knowledge of them depends upon a rare blending of intellectual, practico-technical and perceptual skills". In other words, data analysis from the CR perspective, involves using available concepts to engage in abstraction so as to identify the underlying generative mechanisms that produce events at the level of the actual (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 43).

For example, as I discuss in Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1.1, one of the findings of this study is the existence of a weak relationship between the proprietors and the institution. In this case, a transcendental question such as, "What must be the case for the relationship between the proprietors and the institution to be weak?" could likely lead to identification of possible causal mechanisms that tend to generate such a phenomenon. For a detailed discussion of retroduction, the reader might wish to consult Danermark et al. (2002) and Houston (2010). Below, I summarise the phases in the analysis of data.

Phase	Goals	Activity
A	Identify emergent themes (challenges) in data	Resolving data into initial themes (challenges) inductive inference; Synthesize similar themes into broader themes.
	Identify and fill possible gaps in data	Interrogating data for details to support emergent themes; Collecting additional data to fill observed gaps.
B	Identify possible causal links to emergent themes	Engaging in abductive reasoning to reinterpret and recontextualise themes using concepts in complexity and transformational leadership heuristic devices
C	Identify possible causal mechanisms	Engaging in retroduction by seeking answers to transcendental questions

Table 3: Phases of analysis

5.4 Credibility of the study

In this section I address the issues of credibility or validity as it is often commonly referred to in qualitative study (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 498). Credibility refers to the truthfulness and plausibility of the research findings. Tracy (2010, p. 842) points out that readers of a research report want to know if they can act and make decisions based on the findings. She presents eight criteria for credibility (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). However, as Bloor observes:

> All research findings are shaped by the circumstances of their production, so findings collected by different methods will differ in their form and specificity to a degree that will make their direct comparison problematic (Bloor, as cited in Tracy, 2011, p. 843).

In this study, I strove toward credibility through a process of structural corroboration (triangulation), audit trail, thick description and reflexivity. I discuss these matters in relation to this inquiry.

5.4.1 Structural corroboration

Structural corroboration, also known as "triangulation" or to a limited extent "crystallization" refers to an assumption that "if two or more sources of data, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected, or researchers converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion is more credible" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). However, as Tracy (2010) observes, the application of two or more sources of data or theoretical frameworks or different researchers with a view to reaching the same conclusion is problematic when reality is assumed to be "multiple, fractured, contested, or socially constructed" (and social practices are socially constructed) (p. 843). Nevertheless, in CR, reality exists independent of our identification and although we may not understand it in its entirety, by utilizing different theories and approaches, we are more likely to attain the same conclusion (Sayer, 2000 and Danermark et al., 2002).

As I indicated in Chapter Three and Four, this study was based on critical realist assumptions. In addition, I used complexity as a substantive theory to conceptualise social systems. To compensate for the limitations of the complexity theory of leadership, I used transformational leadership. The combination of the two theoretical frameworks provided theoretical triangulation. It probably provides a better understanding of social systems.

Furthermore, I used an intensive approach in a case study design to enable me to collect data using three methods: in-depth interviews, archival document content analysis and observation. In this way, the limitations of one or more methods were compensated for by the use of other methods. In other words, there was method triangulation. The goal was not to provide a singular truth but a thorough and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Tracy, 2010).

5.4.2 Referential/interpretive evidence

One other strategy for enhancing credibility that I used was "member check" (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 500 and Tracy, 2010). This refers to a practice in which a researcher asks each research participant to check, comment on and validate the accuracy of the transcription of data (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). In this study, after I had transcribed and interpreted each interview text, I sent a copy of the transcript to each participant to check and comment if what s/he had said was what I transcribed and interpreted it to be. I also invited them to clarify any statement or idea which they thought they had not stated clearly or to provide me with additional data when it was necessary. Bloor (in Tracy, 2010, p. 844) advises that “members’ responses to researchers’ accounts are provisional and subject to change”. In the interpretation of the data, there were instances in which I held on to my interpretation.

For example, one of the participants said that the proprietors of the institution did not provide adequate funds to the institution because they viewed the institution as a competitor. Hence, the proprietors sought ways to weaken it. My interpretation of the practice was that the proprietors did not have a thorough understanding of what a university was. Consequently, they failed to appreciate the financial implications of their decision to operate a university. In other words, one of the underlying causes of the low financial base was that the proprietors were not adequately prepared to operate an institution of higher education. Although the participant did not agree with my interpretation, I maintained my interpretation based on my observations in decision-making committees like the University Council. However, as Tracy (2010, p. 844) observes, such arguments serve to “provide space and options for member reflection” and may arouse the need for additional data.

Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, (2010) discuss validity threats to data that are collected through observation. As they recommend, one of the ways to deal with the credibility of observation in data collection is “extended fieldwork” (p. 500). I collected the data on a number of occasions. In some cases, I attended and participated in some of the management meetings and thereby, observed how decisions were made. Such observations enabled me to become aware of the causal mechanisms at play, to critically reflect on different sets of data and in some cases, to revise the interpretations that I had made. I also cross-checked the observations that I made with the relevant members in the research site by asking them to explain to me the meaning of observations.

For example, I observed that the institution was constructing a sports field. To me, the field was too close to the teaching and learning area and the library. My interpretation was that the master planners had failed to appreciate that teaching and learning areas needed to be quiet places, free from noise. I therefore asked how it was that the sports field was being constructed on the site. I learnt that the top management team decided to ignore the master plan and authorize the construction of the sports field on the site. The participant told me the area that the master plan provided for was considered to be too close to residential areas. Therefore, my interpretation was incorrect. In this way, I strove to enhance the credibility of the findings of the study.

5.4.3 Self-reflexivity

Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010, pp. 500 – 501) point to the danger of "allowing selective observation, personal attitudes, preferences and feelings [to] affect interpretation of data". Throughout the research process, I was aware of the need to control bias by striving to be honest with myself, the research and the participants (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). I constantly engaged in reflexivity by critically examining my reasons and motivation for choosing the topic, the theoretical framework, the selection of the site, the participants and literature in this study. I further reflected on the processes that I needed to follow in analyzing, interpreting the data and presenting the findings. In addition, I carefully documented all the literary sources that I used. In doing so, I left an "audit trail" of the inquiry (Tracy, 2010, p. 842).

5.4.4 Thick description

According to Tracy (2010), thick description or rich data is an "in-depth illustration that explicates culturally situated meanings and abundant detail" by accounting for context and the circumstances in which the data were collected (p. 843). Danermark et al. (2002, pp. 16 and 33) claim that social practices are context-specific and that knowledge is theory-dependent. As such, to understand social practices, a researcher needs to be familiar with the language and concepts that the agents utilise in producing and transforming social structures and practices. In representing the social practices, there is therefore the need to give circumstantial and concrete details and explicate the meanings of the concepts and artifacts so as "to ascertain tacit knowledge" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). As Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010, p. 495) observe, qualitative research reports tend to generally be in narrative form. Thick description thus enables the readers to draw their own conclusions based on the data. I conducted this study using English as a medium of communication. All the participants understood and used English well enough to enable a sense of credibility and believability.

5.5 Ethical issues

The issues that I discussed in the section on credibility are, in fact, ethical issues. They deal with a researcher's trustworthiness, relationship with the research participants and site, procedures and the inevitable outcomes (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). Miles & Huberman (Tracy, 2011, p. 846) argue:

> We must consider the rightness or wrongness of our actions as qualitative researchers in relation to the people whose lives we are studying, to our colleagues, and to those who sponsor our work. . . . Naiveté [about ethics] itself is unethical.

Thus Wiles, Charles, Crow & Heath (2006) observe that that there is widespread debate concerning ethical practices in social research. The debate is over issues of anonymity and confidentiality and informed consent (p. 284). Anonymity is said to be a means for minimizing the risk of harm to participants by not giving information or names of research participants or a research site (Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011, p. 199). Confidentiality on the other hand, refers to privacy of data and how the data would be used (Wiles, Charles, Crow & Heath, 2006, p. 287).

Although the implications of anonymity and confidentiality tend to be in conflict with both the need to giving a detailed description of the research process (audit trail) and also the need for knowledge transfer (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010 and Tracy, 2010), I informed all participants what the study was about and discussed its goals and implications. I assured the participants of anonymity, confidentiality and of their freedom to decline to respond to questions that they perceived to be too sensitive and also to withdraw from participating if they felt unsafe. In this report I assigned them pseudonyms or used official positions rather than their personal names (Wiles, Charles, Crow & Heath, 2006; Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010 and Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011). I include a list of the participants in Chapter Six, Section 6.1.3. I attach a letter from the research site granting me permission to carry out the study (Appendix B) and also a sample of an invitation to participate in the research (Appendix C).

Ellis (in Tracy, 2010, p. 847) admonishes researchers on the need to respect the researched and treat participants with dignity. In this study, I negotiated with the research participants about the time, day and place when we could conduct the interviews or access the documents.

Both Tracy (2011, p. 848) and Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, (2010, p. 445) advise researchers to respect the participants' willingness to give access to the institution and to share information. Tracy (2011, p. 848) in particular emphasised the need for researchers to take care of the way they "present findings so as to ward off victim blaming and their unjust appropriation". I avoided as much as I could the including of information that would effectively have legal implications or cause embarrassment to any of the participants or the research site. In addition, I intend to donate a copy of the thesis to the research site when the whole process is over.

5.6Transferability of the research findings

Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen (2010, p. 501) describe transferability (generalisability) as the degree to which the findings of a qualitative research can be applied to other contexts. In this case, it concerns the extent to which the findings of this study could be applied to other private institutions of higher education. Danermark et al. (2002, p. 76) conceptualized generalization in two ways: empiricist and realist. Empiricists tend to understand generalization to mean "the drawing of conclusions about all from the knowledge of the few" based on the statistical relationships that were observed to exist between or among variables (Danermark et al., 2002, pp. 66 and 77).

However, one of the major weaknesses of the empiricist approach in the social sciences according to the critical realists, is that the investigation stops at the level of the empirical. It inevitably fails to explain the underlying causes of the relationship between the research variables. In spite of the empiricists' generalisability claims, scientific findings have had little generalisability in the social sciences (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002; Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005; Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006 and Hibberd, 2010). Tracy (2010, p. 845) concludes:

> Formal quantitative understandings of generalisability are generally unhelpful and not applicable for qualitative research. This is because statistical generalizations require random representational samples using data that is isolated from any particular context or situation. In contrast, qualitative research engages in-depth studies that generally produce historically and culturally situated knowledge. As such, this knowledge can never seamlessly generalize to predict future practice.

In contrast, critical realists and other scientists in the qualitative traditions' understanding of transferability are concerned with the "goodness of fit" between or among groups of people or institutions, "when readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action" (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 501 and Tracy, 2010). In this study I was concerned with unearthing the challenges that private institutions of higher education in Malawi face. I was interested in exploring the underlying causes of the challenges. Therefore, the findings tend to be contextual. To enhance the transferability of the knowledge in a critical realist sense, I provide the reader with data that are both accessible and invitational (Tracy, 2010) and describe the transfactual conditions which tend to characterise the research site (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 77). On the other hand, I am conscious, at the same time, that the findings might be fallible (Sayer 2000 and Danermark et al., 2002).

5.7 My role as a researcher

In the first section of the introduction in Chapter One, I described the motivation and context for this study. Earlier on when I engaged in a similar project at Master's level, I became aware that a serious controversy tends to rage over the issue of carrying out academic research in an organisation in which one is a member. Morse (in Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 59) writes:

> It is not wise for an investigator to conduct a qualitative study in a setting where he or she is already employed and has a work role. The dual roles of investigator and employee are incompatible, and they may place the researcher in an untenable position.

In addition, other scientists, more especially in the positivistic research paradigm, tend to view insider research as deficient in intellectual rigour. They claim that "insider researchers have a personal stake and substantive emotional investment in the setting" and hence, may not attain the distance and objectivity that are viewed to be necessary qualities of valid academic research

(Taylor, 2011, p. 6 and Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 60). It is not possible for me to review all literature on the subject of the insider-outsider research.

Nevertheless, as Wolcott (As cited in Taylor, 2011, p. 6) observes, “Every view is *a* way of seeing, not *the* way of seeing”. The issue of objectivity, to refer to a scientific inquiry being value-free, “may be impossible to achieve” except to a certain extent in quantitative research (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 38 and Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 501). According to critical realism, our experience of phenomena tends to be filtered by our socio-biographical characteristics and beliefs. Hence, we observe social practices through the theories that we hold (Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008, p. 171). One of the implications of the observation is that objectivity in qualitative research, as it is understood in quantitative research, may not be achievable.

On the other hand, some researchers, for example, Taylor (2011) and Adler and Adler (in Brannick and Coghlan, 2007) tend to view being an insider as an advantage because by being an insider, a scientist is accorded an opportunity to gain insights from lived experience, to access both primary and secondary sources of information and to carry out observation without creating suspicion (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, pp. 68-72 and Taylor, 2011, p. 6). In my case, the experience that I gained from working in the organisation enabled me to understand some of the practices, discourses and events that take place in the research site. I partly drew from this experience in reinterpreting and recontextualising data in Chapter Six.

In addition, the issue over “personal stake and substantive emotional investment in the setting” among other criticisms of insider research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 60), is itself inherently problematic. Taken to its logical conclusion, it is more likely to stifle organisational development and transformation. For example, as a Malawian, to a greater extent I am an insider. I undertook this study because I have a personal stake and substantive emotional investment in the development of higher education in Malawi, both as a professional teacher and as a citizen of Malawi. I concur with what Sayer (2000 says:

> While it is advisable to interrogate our research to see if we are not engaging in wishful thinking and to make sure it is capable of acknowledging possible circumstances of which we disapprove, our values need not be a problem (p. 59).

Nevertheless, I was aware that I needed to effectively manage personal bias and avoid wishful thinking so as to strengthen the credibility and confirmability of the study. I have already dealt with the issue of credibility above. For confirmability, I utilised two strategies: epistemic and methodological reflexivity (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 63). In epistemic reflexivity, I kept reflecting on my own belief systems in the way I selected the research site and the participants, the reason for gathering and analyzing the data and the way I collected them.

Danermark et al. (2002) believe that "a reflecting position though, implies of course that the analysis comply [sic] with established scientific demands for comprehensive elucidation and consistency". As I demonstrated in Section 5.2.4.4 above, the analysis complied with scientific demands in an intensive study that is guided by critical realist assumptions using complexity and transformational leadership as substantive theories.

For methodological reflexivity, this report forms a large part of an audit trail. It provides a reader with a relatively thick description of the background, motivation and the goals of the study. It also describes the view of the organisation, the underlying assumptions, the research approach and the study design (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 504).

5.8 Writing up the research report

Sayer (2000) discusses whether a scientific report should be in analytic or narrative style. He observes that the issue really is underpinned by the idiographic-nomothetic debate (pp. 140-152). Danermark et al., (2002, pp. 15 - 16) observe that our scientific attempt to understand the world starts from our concept of it; hence, conceptualization is an important, if not indispensable activity.

Danermark et al. (2002, p. 32) say that social inquiry tends to make social inquirers get involved in 'double hermeneutics' in that inquirers interpret the world that the participants and other people have already interpreted. Therefore, in reporting the stories of participants, a narrative style of writing was more likely going to convey a better representation of their lived experiences. Tracy (2010, p. 845) in addition, argues that “Evocative stories have the power to create in readers the idea that they have experienced the same thing in another arena”.

In this study I analyse and interpret the data in order to explain the causes of the challenges that private higher education in Malawi faces. In this case, I needed to shift from narrative writing that focused on events to analytical writing that focused on underlying structures in the research site (Sayer, 2000, p. 145). Therefore, I chose to present the report in both the narrative and analytic styles. I believed that combining the two writing styles would make the report more accessible, an ‘easy’ read while remaining scholarly.

I used the first person pronoun to avoid distancing myself from my own work. In addition, the report is a channel through which I wanted to communicate to my audience. Therefore, I wanted to relate with readers in a more personal way.

5.9 Summary

I used two strategies to carry out this study. First, I used an intensive approach so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the research site by collecting data on infrastructure, facilities, resources, intentions, motives and meanings that members in the research site attach to their actions and events. I purposefully selected both the research site and participants. Second, I used a case study research design. I wanted to study causal mechanisms and their effects in a natural setting so as to trace the social structures in which they tend to be embedded.

To collect data I used three methods, namely, in-depth interviews, observation and archival document content analysis. I analysed data in three phases using qualitative methods. In addition, I attended to concerns that are raised by qualitative studies regarding credibility, generalisability, ethical issues, the role of a researcher and report writing.

In the chapter that follows I reinterpret and recontextualise the findings in order to explicate the effects and possible causal links of the challenges that the research site faces. I utilise complexity and transformational leadership as substantive theories.

Chapter Six

Recontextualisation of institutional complexity

> *There is no theory-neutral observation, description, interpretation, theorisation, explanation, or whatever. There is, in other words, no unmediated access to the world: access is always mediated* (Fleetwood & Ackroyd, 2004, p. 30. Emphasis in original).

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two I presented complexity and transformational leadership theories as theoretical frameworks which I used to understand an organisation and leadership behaviour respectively. Complexity theory, as Morrison (2008, p. 20) says is "a theory of survival, evolution, development and adaptation". It attempts to describe organisations and communities including societies and patterns of interactions and interdependences of the constitutive agents and the new properties that emerge from the interactions. The constitutive agents or elements of a social system may be institutions, human or nonhuman resources or all of them put together (Byrne, 2005; Mason, 2008; Bergendorff, 2010 and Jones & Corner, 2012).

On the other hand, transformational leaders tend to understand leadership as a transformative process. They raise the level of consciousness of the followers to a higher level and encourage the follower to perform better that they expected. The leaders view themselves as models of desirable behaviour and exemplify ethical and moral behaviour (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008).

Transformational school leaders identify, craft and articulate an inspiring and challenging vision for the school and share it with the followers; they formulate the goals for the school through consensual decision-making processes. They attend to the personal and professional needs of individual staff, encourage staff to recontextualise and challenge their own and the practices in the school; be creative and innovative in working toward achieving the goals of school in relation with the vision; transformational leaders implement structures that enable the staff to participate in and contribute to decision-making processes, foster collaboration and strengthen the culture of the school so as to build cohesive relationships that are based on caring, trust, shared values and beliefs (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012) (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.12).

Now, in this chapter, my objective is to recontextualise the findings of the study by applying abductive inference. Danermark et al. (2002, p. 91) say, "To recontextualise, i.e. to observe, describe, interpret and explain something within the frame of a new context, is a central element in scientific practice". The 'frame of new context' that I use draws on both complexity and transformational leadership theoretical frameworks.

Recontextualisation is necessary because, according to Houston (2010, p. 76), social practices are outcomes of interactions between and among contextual factors such as material resources and culture, time, place, and human agency. Therefore, to understand the emergence of private higher education in Malawi and the nature and causes of the challenges it faces, I found it necessary to theoretically recontextualise the patterns of relationships and the agents so as to explicate mechanisms that tend to condition the challenges that make private higher education in Malawi to be what it is. In turn, it would be possible to identify the underlying causes of the challenges.

6.2 Recontextualisation of institutional complexity

In the subsections that follow I contextualise the challenges in the research site (refer to Section5.3.2.1 for a description of the site). To do so, I apply three conceptual frameworks from complexity theory as heuristic devices to enable me to make sense of the phenomena. The concepts are 1) Emergent phenomena; (2) Complexity leadership; and (3) Requisite variety. In addition, I simultaneously apply the three themes in transformational leadership: (1) Setting directions; (2) Developing people and (3) Redesigning the organisation (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). I summarise data that I captured using these frameworks in Table 2 below. First, I summarise each concept then utilise it to abduct data.

Conceptual framework	Properties of challenges interrogated
Emergence	Access and equity in provision of public higher education; Socio-political phase transition; Agency, social structure and emergence of private higher education; Government higher education management control mechanisms; Patterns of social relationships, interdependences and emergent challenges.
Complexity leadership	Management challenges at governance level; Management challenges at institutional level: Top management; Management challenges at institutional level: Middle and lower level.
Requisite variety	Infrastructural challenges: resources and facilities; Finance and funding challenges; Personnel challenges (academic and non-academic staff).
Setting directions	Decision-making processes Setting expectations.
Developing people	Interpersonal relationships at governance level; Interpersonal relationship within the institutional; Student management challenges.
Redesign the organisation	Governance-Leadership challenges; Organisational climate challenges; Challenges in work relationships.

Table 2: A conceptual framework for challenges in private higher education

6.2.1 Emergent phenomena

An emergent phenomenon is described as a qualitative novelty in a system or a semi-autonomous level of activity that is generated out of the system's components and transcends to produce outcomes that are unexpected or striking in some way (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 637). The conditions that tend to enable emergence of new phenomena are mostly "the manifold interactions among constitutive elements or agents" of the system (Mason, 2009, p. 113). As new agents come into or interact with the system, the number of connections and potential interactions multiplies thereby increasing the number of possible outcomes. The opposite may also be true. However, not only is the essence of the constitutive agents significant but also the connections and the dynamic interactions among the agents. Using emergence as a conceptual framework, I contextualise the rise of private higher education in Malawi and the challenges it faces.

6.2.1.1 Emergence of private higher education

The development of private higher education in Malawi could be said to be an emergent phenomenon. It has risen from the dynamic interactions among interrelated and interdependent agents influenced by various socio-political factors. After the one-party rule gave way to multiparty politics, one of the priorities of the new political dispensation was the expansion of primary education. Thus, in 1994, the Malawi government introduced free primary education in an effort to address access to basic education. As a result enrolment in primary school increased from 1.9 million to 3.2 million (Malawi Government, Education for All Action Plan [Malawi. EFA], 2005 and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education, 1995 – 2010 [SAMEC], 2010).

In turn, there was a rise in secondary school enrolment from 180,157 in 2004 to 233,573 in 2008 (approximately 30 percent increase). However, higher education was not substantially expanded to meet the consequent rise in demand for admission by learners who would successfully complete secondary school education. Total university enrolment in two public universities (University of Malawi and Mzuzu University) only increased from 6,478 in 2004 to 7,972 in 2008, 23 percent increase (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Department of Planning, Education Statistics [Malawi. DoP], 2008). Access to higher education remained restricted. The challenge became too critical to be ignored. That is, it reached “the edge of chaos” (Morrison, 2008, p. 22) thereby compelling the government to address it. One of the solutions was to liberalise the provision of higher education. Therefore, government invited the private sector to participate. The Director said:

> *When there was change of politics in 1994, it’s when the government realized that the demand for university education … was at such an alarming rate that the University of Malawi alone could not consume this demand. Government called the private sector to come on board and see how they could assist them in delivering higher education* (Interviewed on September 21, 2011, at 14h00).

The demand for higher education may have been suppressed during the one-party rule. In the multiparty political dispensation, people tended to be freer to interact with each other and communicate their opinions and interests. It is likely that it is in such a state of affairs that the government realised that the demand for higher education "was at such an alarming rate" and sought ways to deal with the challenge. Hence, change in party politics in 1994 was a phase transition in which a new development emerged within the higher education system and the provision of education in general (Mason, 2009, p. 118).

On the other hand, there is pressure on the Malawi government, and of course, African governments in general, to increase access to higher education. Higher education tends to be widely associated with socio-economic development of a country; hence, the urge to improve on access and equity in higher education (WCHE, 1998; Assie-Lumumba, 2006; Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006; Schultheis, 2006 and Varghese, 2006). The VC said, "*The international community, particularly the United Nations, wants Malawi to increase the number of students at the university level from the 0.5 per cent to 10 per cent*" (Interviewed on October 11, 2011 at 15h00). One of the strategies for improving access to higher education was therefore, to liberalise higher education. As I demonstrate in the following section, the private sector joined in.

6.2.1.1.1 Providers of private higher education

According to the Director (quoted above), the first to participate in offering private higher education were the Christian church organisations. Other private individuals participated in due course. As I indicated earlier on in Chapter One, Section 1.2.1, it was the Christian church missionaries who were the first to offer Western European basic education in Malawi (Chimombo, 2003 and Banda, 1982). Higher education may have been the logical next step in the provision of education. However, other private individuals and configurations of individuals participated in providing higher education as the following quotation demonstrates:

> *The faith community was the first to open private institution universities … and then it also went on that even individuals and other people came together and opened universities…. there has been a mushrooming of so many private universities* (Director, interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h20).

The Malawi government intends to double access to higher education by 2017 (Malawi.MoEST, 2008, p. 24). The Malawi government, in addition to inviting the private sector to participate in providing higher education intends to achieve the goal by

> *bringing on board the establishment of six new universities so that we have an additional six universities. Now, we will have Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources which is basically delinking Bunda from the University of Malawi … and then adding on the Natural Resources College, ARET and Chitedze to become Lilongwe, the new Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. At present with the assistance of the Chinese government, in Thyolo there's the Malawi University of Science and Technology under construction. There's also a site for the University of Marine Biology in Mangochi. The site has been identified and construction is due to start any time. But also government wants to establish the University of Mombera in Mzimba, another university in Nkhotakota, another university in Bangula - six new universities to be public universities* (Director, interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h20).

The establishment of six universities would increase the number of public higher education institutions to eight thereby adapting the higher education system to meeting the demand in its environment. I summarised the challenges that the existing public higher education faces in Chapter Two, Section 2.2.4.3. According to the Director (ibid.), government would still need private providers to continue providing higher education. Government has put in place a mechanism to control the development of higher education.

6.2.1.1.2 Mechanism for controlling development of higher education

The Malawi National Council for Higher Education Bill was passed in parliament on 24 June 2011 (Liwimbi, 2011), eight years after the establishment of four more private institutions of higher education. The Director said:

> *So, one of the things we have done is formulate a policy. The last parliament seating in June passed a Bill on higher education to establish a Higher Education Council. It has been assented to by the State President. As this is now a policy, the National Council of Higher Education will now have the power* (Malawi.MoEST, 2008, p. 24 and Director, interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h20).

Prior to the passing of the Bill to establish the National Council for Higher Education in 2011, the Office of the President and Cabinet set up a committee to evaluate and accredit private institutions of higher education. However, the committee failed to control the development of private higher education because some private higher providers did not apply for accreditation. The Director said:

> *Some have and others have not even come forward to say that they have opened a university. So now, they are operating on their own and yet they have students there. So, control has been quite a challenge* (Interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h20).

The committee that the Director refers to is the Credential Evaluation Committee (CEC). It is housed in the Malawi Government Office of President and Cabinet, Department of Human Resource Planning and Development (HRP & D) (Reference No. HRP & D/POL/4). In other words, although the Malawi government had a mechanism that was intended to manage and control the development of private higher education, the Credential Evaluation Committee had hitherto been unable to effectively control its proliferation. In other words, a mechanism may be effective or ineffective even when it is in place. As Mason (2009, p. 119) observes:

> When one is dealing with intelligent agents in the social sciences, this means taking account of an individual's conscious intentionality as it is constrained and enabled by the environment, which in turn is constituted, inter alia, by other conspicuous individuals.

Thus, it can be argued that private higher education in Malawi emerged from the dynamic interaction of various agents and configurations of agents both in the internal and external environments. As an emergent phenomenon, it was not planned for as evidenced by the establishment of the Share World Open University August 1994. This was nine years before the Malawi government reviewed the University Education Act in order "to accommodate private sector initiatives" (Malawi.PRSP, 2002, p. 35).

It can further be argued that the emergence of private higher education in Malawi took government by surprise. As data demonstrate, government did not have a mechanism in place to deal with the new development. Consequently, it could not promptly respond to applications for accreditation or control the proliferation of private institutions of higher education. On the other hand, government may have had a mechanism but the mechanism could not be activated promptly for whatever reasons, to deal with the demand for accreditation. Also the mechanism may have been too weak or narrow to deal with the demand. In other words, the mechanism was overwhelmed by the new development and the effectiveness of a mechanism is contingent on other factors (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 56).

Due to the limitations of time, resources, the scope and the goals of this study, I did not investigate the underlying causes of government's inability to meet the demand for higher education. Neither did I inquire into causes underlying the failure of CEC to effectively control the development of private higher education. I think that understanding the causes of the failure is necessary because the causes have implications when dealing with the challenges that both public and private higher education face in Malawi.

It appears that the motivation for creating space to enable the private sector to participate in providing higher education was the government's failure to satisfy the demand for higher education. In other words, government was not necessarily motivated by an interest in providing alternative types of higher education and was only attempting to deal with the crisis in the provision of higher education. Thus, providers tend to have different motives and goals for providing higher education.

6.2.1.1.3 Motives and goals of providers of higher education

Agents who provide higher education in Malawi, both government and private, tend to be motivated by various factors. The Malawi government tends to view higher education as one of the strategies for national development and poverty reduction (Malawi.MoEST, 2008 and Malawi.PRSP, 2002). While some of the private providers seem to view higher education as a commodity for trade: "*All they are interested in is money*" (Director, interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h00), other agents tend to view higher education as one of the strategies for socio-political redress and for the propagation of the Christian faith: *"We don't agree with the quota system policy"* and further *"to us, education is for communicating the character of Christ to the learners"* (Proprietor 1, interviewed on January 22, 2012 at 13h00).

Proprietor 2 (Interviewed on July 27, 2012 at 15h00) expressed similar views. As Schultheis (2005, p. 98) asserts, "As Christians, we may agree that the Christian Mission is sharing the good news of the Gospel and seeking to live by it". In other words, the motives of contemporary Christian church leaders in providing higher education tend to be similar to some of the motives that the early Christian missionaries had for introducing the Western European type of basic education in Malawi, (refer to Chapter One, Section 1.2.1) namely, a tool for evangelisation and for dealing with social prejudice and discrimination. The Christian missionaries tend to view their roles as transformative in which case they enable others to become more autonomous (Zhu et al., 2011, p. 150). It could be argued in this case that higher education in Malawi tends to be provided to serve instrumental purposes – to address the socio-economic needs of the country - rather than solely for the development of the mind (Malawi.MoEST, 2008; Adrian, 2007 and Malawi.PRSP, 2002).

However, the goals of the private providers of higher education are not totally aligned to national goals of higher education that the Malawi government has set. For example, it has been observed that private institutions of higher education avoid offering science and technology programmes because they require more financial capital outlay. Yet government desires the institutions to offer science and technology programmes for the socio-economic development of the country. The Director said:

> *They (private institutions of higher education) go for the humanities because they just need textbooks (laughs) but where you need a lab, a proper lab to engage with chemicals and all that, and chemicals are expensive, they avoid the sciences and technology programmes. There's a need to harness science and technology because this is the only way if we are to develop. I am not undermining the other programmes because we still need humanities in life. We still need theology. We still need drama and all that, for example. However, ICT has become essential - for you to perform you need ICT at least* (Director, interviewed, September 21, 2011 at 14h00).

The Director believes that the reason for avoiding offering science and technology programmes is lack of funds: science and technology programmes are more costly to offer than humanities. The Director therefore, appears to be dissatisfied with what the private providers offer.

However, there is no evidence that the Director intends to take responsibility for enabling the private providers to offer the programmes for the good of the country. It seems that there is little interdependence between the macro and micro education systems. In addition, government officials lack the interest in raising the consciousness of the providers to do more than they expect by suggesting and/or offering solutions (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011).

Hence, one of the challenges that a private institution tends to face is funding. The lack of funds tends to constrain the desire to offer academic programmes that government considers critical for the development of the country. Therefore, they offer what they can offer given the situation. One of the participants in this study said:

> *We would like to offer science and technology. The Secretary for Education challenged us to do so during the graduation last year, but funds are difficult to come by you know. But we surely need to if as a church we want to make a positive impact on our country* (Proprietor 1, interviewed on January 22, 2012 at 13h00).

Head 1 said that scarcity of funds tends to be a challenge in the provision of education (refer to Section 6.3.3.2 below). It tends to constrain the operations and functions of an institution.

6.2.1.2 Emergence of the private case institution

Data show that the case institution opened in 2004 (Footprints, 2004 and Minute 93 of Management Board Meeting of September 12, 2003). According to Proprietor 1 (Interviewed on January 22, 2012 at 13h00), the church leaders had observed that there were many school leavers from the churches and other secondary schools who qualified for admission into the university. Most of the school leavers would not be admitted into the university because of the quota system policy that government imposed so as to address the issue of equity and access. That is, access to higher education was not based on merit but political consideration.

Also, following the economic collapse in Zimbabwe, it was too expensive for the proprietors to send its employees to learn in the church's institution of higher education institution there: *"The situation in Zimbabwe became volatile overnight. Within a school term they could adjust fees upwards twice. How can you budget? So we said, 'Let's just have our own"* (Proprietor 1, interviewed on January 22, 2012 at 13h00). That is to say, the system in Malawi was affected by events in a system in its external environment. As the data show however, although the decision to establish their own institution was partly influenced by the economic situation in Zimbabwe, the proprietor was not financially prepared to offer higher education. The proprietor was equally in economic crisis (refer to Section 6.3.3 below).

Lastly, the proprietors wanted to offer a different type of education in an environment that is different from the existing environment in public or some of the private institutions of higher education. Higher education tends to be viewed as a mechanism for evangelisation, as Proprietor 1 said: "*So, our main focus is not only to train them in earthly knowledge but we should train them more so that they should also know and fear the Lord" (*Interviewed on January 22, 2012 at 13h00). However, development of private higher education faces challenges. In the following section, I contextualise major challenges that I found in the study.

6.2.1.3 Challenges in the development of private higher education

The emergence and development of private higher education faces challenges. In the study I observed that the case institution has faced challenges of two kinds. The first set of challenges concerns the attempts to get government accreditation. Due to various factors that I summarise below, the process was slow and unclear. The second set of challenges concerns threats to the existence of the institution as it adapts to the demands that arise in its internal environment. This environment consists of proprietors and the agents within the institution. First, I contextualise the challenge of getting accreditation. Second, I deal with the challenges that concern the survival of the institution.

6.2.1.3.1 Government accreditation

Although the application for accreditation was first submitted in 2000, it took six years for the MoEST to respond. According to the report, the MoEST advised the applicant that the MoEST would respond later (Education Director's report to the Executive Committee, March 2000). The matter was followed up twice (Letters dated March 06, 2002 and February 04, 2004). The MoEST replied in 2005. However, in its reply, the MoEST said that a College Task Force would inspect the institution on a date to be advised (E-mail dated July 19, 2005). In other words, by the time the e-mail was written, the MoEST had not determined the date for the visit to the institution. It may be deduced that MoEST was unprepared to respond to applications for accreditation.

It is possible, on the other hand, that the date had been set but the visit was intended to be a surprise. I have observed that often, MoEST inspectors tend to hide the day of inspection. However, in this case it is most probable that the date had not been set because when the inspectors came in 2009, the CEC communicated the date before the visit. It is most likely, nevertheless, that the e-mail was written just to alleviate the pressure that the institution was exerting on the MoEST to attend to the request. In other words, MoEST was not ready for the visit but wanted to be seen to be doing something.

Two years later the institution submitted a reminder (Letter dated November 02, 2007). The MoEST, in its reply, advised the institution to arrange for a visit by a team consisting of twelve people. The visit would last for a day. The institution should identify a hotel in which the MoEST team would meet with the authorities of the institution so as to present and discuss the findings. The institution would bear the cost of the hotel accommodation, transportation, meals, refreshments, duty and seating allowances (money paid to members of a committee for the time spent attending a committee or an official appointment) for two days. In addition, the institution was to provide for subsistence for three drivers for the two days. The MoEST would bear the cost of stationery (Letter dated December 31, 2007, Ref. No. HRP&D/POL/4T). However, although the institution agreed to the conditions, the Credentials Evaluation Committee (CEC) did not visit the institution.

Two years later, on June 19, 2009, the CEC visited, evaluated and accredited the institution as a tuition provider of a university with which it was affiliated (Visitor's Book). The accreditation was confirmed seven months later in a letter dated January 14, 2010 (Reference No. HRP&D/POL/4). By then, the institution had been operating for five years unaccredited. The evaluation lasted for just a day, contrary to earlier communication. It was not clear whether or not the practice of requiring the institution to bear the cost of the evaluation process was the official policy of the MoEST. The CEC officials claimed that that was the process. In the absence of policy documents, it was difficult to ascertain the claim. It may be concluded however, that it was not MoEST official policy. As I have indicated, when the CEC visited the institution the members of the committee did not claim transport charges and allowances from the institution.

One of the effects of the failure to visit the school for evaluation and accreditation was that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology could not permit the learners in the teacher education programme at the institution to do teaching practice in public schools for three successive years. The MoEST advised the institution to deal with the issue of accreditation first (Letters dated April 16, 2007, May 15, 2008 and August 11, 2010, Ref TP In/2/8). Yet government had not put in place mechanisms for evaluating an institution for accreditation purposes. Thus, even though the Malawi government invited the private sector to participate in the provision of higher education, interdependence between government and the private sector tended to be constrained by government structures. The type of interaction between government and the private provider of higher education gave rise to frustration and a sense of helplessness among the agents in the institution.

Thus, although it appears that the institution was intentionally established, it can be argued that it was an emergent phenomenon from the dynamic interactions of various constitutive agents of the socio-political and economic systems both within and outside Malawi: the economic conditions that prevailed in Zimbabwe and their effects outside Zimbabwe; the demand for higher education and the equity policy in Malawi; the environment in which public higher education was provided in Malawi and the intentions of the proprietors to provide a different type of education.

In addition, it can further be argued that one of the challenges that the development of private higher education has faced in Malawi has been the lack of an efficient and effective mechanism in the MoEST for control, evaluation and accreditation as the Director observed. Government's invitation to the public sector to participate in the provision of higher education was not followed by structural changes to accommodate the new development. It was an invitation made by a desperate agent in a desperate situation: there was a discrepancy between practice and policy. Thus, absence of such a structure gave rise to frustration and a sense of helplessness in agents who decided to provide private higher education.

Furthermore, the absence of effective control mechanisms tended to enable private providers of higher education to take advantage of the situation and operate institutions that were not accredited. The Director said:

> *Some have and others have not even come forward to say that they have opened a university. So now, they are operating on their own and yet they have students there.*
> *So, I am quite worried because many Malawians think, oh, that's it, let me get an education because they want higher education, only to realize after finishing that no, this is not a recognized institution (Interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 10h00).*

Also, it has been observed that the goals of providers of private higher education tend not to be aligned to all the goals that the Malawi government has set for higher education, more especially in respect of science and technology courses. The interdependence that exists between government and private providers may be mostly about the need to satisfy the demand for higher education. That is, it tends to serve instrumental purposes only. The Director appears less interested in enhancing the capacity of the providers to enable them to diversify programmes or become more sustainable than worry about many Malawians who patronize unaccredited institutions.

Nevertheless, the need is being met through collaborative effort: "interdependence is *a more powerful force for change* than alignment around a 'single' vision" or goal (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 642). In other words, although both private and public agents have their own respective goals and visions for providing higher education, they have nevertheless brought about change in the provision of higher education. Mason (2009) points out that in social systems the interactions become more complex as an individual's conscious intentionality is constrained and enabled by the environment, constituted by conscious individuals and other agents (p. 119).

Some of the challenges, however, tend to be unique to the institution itself. They concern the institution's adaptation to its internal environment as it seeks to survive. In the following sections, I further reinterpret the data so as to contextualise the major challenges that the institution faces. One of the challenges that the institution faces concerns the perception that the proprietors have about their institution. It is secularisation.

6.2.1.3.2 Secularisation

The researched institution was reorganised and restructured in July 2008. This was in keeping with recommendations of a consultant who was sent by the university to which the institution was affiliated. Following the reorganisation and the restructuring, the first Vice Chancellor, Principal and Business Supervisor were replaced. A new Dean of Students was appointed and a new position of the Director of Public Relations and Development was created and filled. In addition, a University Council was established. The status of the institution was changed from college to university (Minutes of the Extraordinary Council, July 31, 2008). On August 01, 2008, the Chancellor of the university announced this new development to the university community in an assembly specifically called for the purpose.

The reorganisation and the restructuring incident marked a "phase transition" whereby according to Mason, (2009, p. 117) the addition of new agents to a system multiplies the number of connections and possible dynamic interactions among the agents. In turn, it also increases possible outcomes – emergent phenomena. However, the emergent properties and behaviours are contingent on contextual factors that are unique to particular systems (Mason, 2009, p. 118).

One of the emergent behaviours that the institution faces is secularisation. The constituent agents tend to be characterised by an apparent loss of interest in participating in spiritual activities. They fail to manifest a Christian lifestyle as espoused by the institution and the proprietor. In a public meeting which all the members of the university community were required to attend (Meeting held on campus on March 08, 2010, at about 16h00), the Chancellor of the university, who is also the head of the church that sponsors the institution, strongly criticised secular tendencies of the members of the institution. He claimed that some of the learners and the staff were not regularly attending church services on days of worship; some of the learners were drinking beer, smoking chamba (Indian hemp), engaging in illicit sexual affairs and were not dressing properly. He was surprised that even the learners who were studying to become clergy were also involved. In other words, the institutional leaders tended to fail to model best practices and build a cohesive school culture that was informed by the vision, mission, values and beliefs of the system in which the institution is embedded (Mason, 2009 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

In this study, my findings were similar to the observations that the Chancellor made. For example, the Dean expressed surprise and dismay that some of the learners drank beer even while they were in a prayer meeting or attending classes in a classroom. In an institution where taking alcoholic drinks of any type is prohibited, the Dean found the behaviour of the learners unacceptable. The learners seemed to be not only interested in drinking beer but also challenging the status quo by disregarding the values and the rules of the institution and attempting to cheat the authorities. The Dean said:

> *And to our horror and dismay, we discovered that some of them were mixing alcohol with a clear glass of water and whilst you are in class, they're getting drunk right at [under] your own nose. And some even in religious meetings - you're sitting with them in religious meetings and you think that they're drinking water from a clear glass. No, they are actually drinking beer (Interviewed on October 06, 2012 at 10h00).*

The institution does not allow learners, even other members for that matter, to take alcoholic drinks (Student Information Handbook, 2010, p. 42). However, I have observed that drunkenness tends to persist among learners. For example, according to the Dean (Interviewed on August 2012 at 19h00), four learners from the institution were arrested by police after they assaulted a bartender and vandalised property in a bar on December 01, 2011. The incident took place in a town near to the institution. A court of law convicted one of the learners of criminal offences. Consequently, the institution expelled him and suspended the remaining three. I obtained the information through a telephone conversation that I had with the guardian of one of the learners and trustworthy persons from the institution.

Furthermore, on May 11, 2012, six learners went to drink beer in a village about two kilometres from the institution. In the morning, one of them was found dead by the roadside on May 12, 2012. The police believed that he had possibly died of profuse bleeding from head injuries for he had a deep cut in the head. His accomplices believed that he had jumped off a truck while it was moving possibly to escape from paying a fare. One of the accomplices sustained a fracture of the lower part of one of his legs after he had jumped off a truck in which he was travelling back. The Chaplain (Interviewed on August 26, 2012 at 08h00) cited drunkenness among learners as one of the spiritual challenges that the institution faces. In other words, drunkenness is viewed to be a spiritual challenge from the Christian theological perspective of the authorities.

In addition, some of the learners live in rented houses in the villages close to the campus. They tend to be motivated by factors other than issues of social relationships. Some learners live in rented houses because they cannot afford to pay residence fees. Student 1, for example, said,

> *The fees are very high. I struggle to make it. Currently, I am not in residence. This is my last semester. I am off campus. I can't afford the residence fees* (Student 1, interviewed on November 11, 2011 at 10h00).

However, other learners rent properties in the village because they want to live with their spouses while some of them want to live on their own. I observed that some of the male and female single learners live together as married couples although the institution proscribes the behaviour (Student Information Handbook, 2010, pp. 30 and 31). I verified the observation by inquiring from one of the landlords whose house was rented out to a couple. He admitted that that was the case.

In addition, one of the male learners who shared rent with another two learners said his other two friends, a male and a female learner shared a room. They were in love. Therefore, it may be reasonably concluded that some of the learners lived off campus so as to live the way they wanted, unrestrained by some of the rules of the institution.

Another emergent behaviour was drug abuse as the Dean (Interviewed on October 06, 2011 at 10h00) reported:

> *We have problems of alcohol drinking and drug abuse. In the past, this was not a problem because we monitored how they moved. Now, that is not possible. … you know, we have these villagers who walk in and out the campus. Some of them bring this stuff, chamba (Indian hemp), beer, tobacco, and so on. But some students go into the village or to town to drink beer.*

The Chancellor blamed the administrators for the behaviour and accused them of attempting to secularise the institution. He did not offer to deal with the challenge. That is, he was not willing to be held accountable for the well-being of the institution, as a steward of the members of the institution.

It can be argued that the relationship between the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor in this case is one of a master and a slave. The Chancellor affirms a large power distance[8] between himself and the Vice Chancellor and demonstrates it publicly. Also, he tends to manifest authoritarian tendencies characterised by a lack of interpersonal acceptance and a collective approach to dealing with challenges that arise in a system. He distances himself, does not empathise and initiate collective action (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011, p. 481). It can further be argued that the Chancellor appears to hold a linear view of social practices rather than seeing them as emergent phenomena that manifest themselves in nonlinear systems (Agar, 1999, p. 2). He also tends to manifest strong authoritarian aggressive behaviour, a phenomenon that is characterised by a tendency to look out for people who fail to conform to conventional norms so as to condemn and punish them (Roiser & Willig, 2002, p. 76).

As heterogeneous agents dynamically interact among themselves and with other agents in the external environment, they share information. As a result, information enables the agents to co-evolve (change) thereby manifesting new behaviours that cannot be reduced to the essence of the constituent agents (Morrison, 2010, p. 377). This may account for the unexpected new behaviour that the staff and learners, even the learners that were studying to become clergymen exhibit (Clark, MacIntyre & Cruickshank, 2007; Mason, 2009; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Bergendorff, 2010 and Hanna, Lord & Pearce, 2011). In a study that Kasapila and Mkandawire (2010, p. 441) carried out on the consumption of alcohol among undergraduate learners in Malawi, they found that 68.5 percent of respondents consumed alcohol moderately and 85.4 percent of the respondents described themselves as binge drinkers. That is, consumption of alcohol among learners tends to be a challenge in some of the higher education institutions including the research site. In social systems, a small event such as the re-organisation of the institution, can trigger huge change as in this case (Morrison, 2010, p. 377).

[8] "Power distance refers to the 'extent to which less powerful members of organisations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally'" (Hofstede & Bond, as quoted in Rinne, Steel & Fairweather, 2012, p. 96).

As Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009) observed, authoritarian, centralised control systems tend to be detrimental to innovation. Rather, administrative supervisors need to create systems, structures and policies that effectively engage change dynamics across all the levels of an organisation (p. 644). Mason (2009, p. 118) cautions that when one is dealing with intelligent agents, there is a need to take into account "an individual's conscious intentionality as it is constrained and enabled by the environment, which … is constituted … by other conscious individuals" and, thence, the need to be concerned with "contextualised and contingent complex wholes". Therefore, issues of strategy and expectations become significant when one is seeking to design and implement a change intervention (p. 119).

However, as leadership and management theories comprise the transitive dimension of knowledge (Chapter Four, Section *4.1.3*), leaders and managers ought to be aware that "there are no motivation strategies, organisational structures, decision-making patterns, communication techniques, change approaches, or leadership styles that will fit all situations" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 11). Dealing with secularisation as a challenge requires much more than paying attention to a single factor – the administration (Haggis, 2008). A single challenge may have multiple underlying causes thereby necessitating a non-reductionist approach. It may require implementing multiple interventions in different subsystems within an organisation as well as in other systems in the external environment (Anderson et al., 2005 and Mason, 2008).

Leaders need to demonstrate respect for followers by utilising persuasion rather than coercion. It seems that proprietors tend to use a coercive approach in dealing with leadership challenges thereby making administrators lose their sense of self-worth and self-efficacy (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Thus the weak relationship between the proprietor and the institution may be partly closely connected to the authoritarian approach to dealing with challenges.

As the following sections show, the institution faces other challenges. One of them is the helplessness and frustration that agents experience as they interact with each other and other constituent nonhuman agents.

6.2.1.3.3 Helplessness and frustration

There has been an increase in student enrolment in the institution from 17 in 2004 to 324 in 2011 (VC, interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00). The increase has given rise to the need for more living space and for an adequate supply of water. Both the administrators and the learners are unable to deal with the immediate circumstances in which they find themselves. The institution faces a critical shortage of water, more especially during the dry season that tends to run from early June to early December. There is one source of water: underground water. This is accessed by electrical pumps that were installed in three wells. They pump the water into two 5,000-litre plastic tanks that are mounted on a mound that is raised close to the main entrance to the institution.

However, the structure of the underlying rock is such that it cannot yield water, according to the findings of the Malawi Government Department of Water Development that were shared with me in 2006. The rock holds rain water. Therefore, the amount of water available tends to be proportional to the amount of rainfall in the course of a year and the level demanded by the agents and other organisms. As a result, the availability of water in the institution is unreliable (document and observation). Thus, the interaction between the human agents in terms of demand for water and the nonhuman agent in terms of availability of the water tends to generate frustration and helplessness. The infrequent supply of water tends to constrain the agents' desire to live in a healthy environment. A participant in this study, Student 1, who was interviewed on November11, 2011 at 10h37 said:

> *I've seen issues like, maybe the cleanliness for example of the toilets, the surroundings, the availability of necessary things, things like water. Water is scarce, really. It's a problem. It is not consistently available and it is not enough. At times, we have water, maybe in the morning, then not in the afternoon. So, the rooms are dirty always. You can come and see. When it rains then there is mud on the whole floor (he looks sad). You can't mop because water is a problem. So, our houses are not good. Guys don't cooperate as before to just clean (Stops talking and looks down, sad).*

In addition, the water situation also tends to be a source of tension and a moral challenge between some members of the contiguous community close at the edge of the institution boundaries (external environment) and cafeteria staff. A cook (Interviewed on April 27, 2012, at 09h00) reported that the members of the community collected water from a tank at the cafeteria. When water runs out, the staff has to fetch water one and a half kilometres away outside the campus. If the administration decides to stop the members of the community from drawing water from the tank, the decision would be a morally controversial issue not only because the institution espouses Christian spiritual values but also because of the principle of corporate social responsibility. In addition, the members of the community draw water for free because most of them are too poor to pay. The situation gives rise to a sense of helplessness and frustration among the authorities. However, both the authorities and the learners opt to live with the challenge rather than explore other possible alternative sources of water like rain harvesting. In other words, there is a lack of intellectual stimulation in the form of creativity and innovation (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012)

6.2.1.3.4 Waste of resources and vandalism

Some of the resident learners deliberately collect more food than they can take or claim to collect food for a friend who is too busy with class work. However, they eat only what they can and throw away the rest. As a result, the food supply often tends to be inadequate (The cook, interviewed on April 27, 2012 at 09h00). Often, the kitchen staff has to prepare meals for the learners who could not be served because food had run out.

In some instances, much food remains because some of the resident learners fail to come to collect it. The learners may either eat food which they have purchased elsewhere, especially if they do not like the food on the menu for the day. Some of the learners do not eat the food because they have gone away, especially for weekends. Few of them give notice of the impending excursion. Consequently, some of the food that cannot be saved is wasted. Although the kitchen staff works together with the garden staff to use the food as compost, it is still a waste.

Another emergent challenge is vandalism. Some of the learners vandalise the property of the institution, as reported by the Dean (Interviewed on October 06, 2011 at 10h00). He said, "*I* *think we're coming from a culture that did not have these challenges when some of us were growing up. But today, it's a thing to vandalize equipment left, right and centre".*

I noticed that a few days after a new residence hall for ladies was inaugurated, some of the toilet seats and cistern covers were removed. Some learners scratched fictitious names and slogans on the walls and the ceiling. In the houses in which male learners reside, some of the covers over electrical sockets were removed or damaged, leaving electrical wires exposed. In some bathrooms, shower roses were missing.

There were chairs with broken legs or seats heaped against walls outside some of the buildings as well as inside some of the classrooms. In some cases, chairs were collected from classrooms on the ground where some learners may have wanted to have an academic discussion or social interaction. However, the chairs were not always taken back to where they had taken them from. In other words, the chairs were left outside in the open. It may be argued that there is either little control over the use of chairs or that some of the learners ignore the guidance or both. In this case, the learners appear not to have internalized the theory of sustainable development and stewardship of resources and the link it has with institutional sustainability (Comm & Mathaisel, 2005 and Everett, 2008).

In the maintenance shop there were some damaged beds that needed repair. Some of the property may have possibly been accidentally broken or worn out with use. However, in most of the cases, it was evident that the damage was due to vandalism, for instance, removal of cistern and electrical socket covers; scratching names and slogans on walls and/or furniture; missing locks on doors. Hence, wastage of foodstuff and vandalism are major challenges that the institution faces as the DoF says below..

The challenges have financial and other implications. Having the property repaired and food supplies replenished is costly to the institution. As the DoF alleges, the two factors comprise the major expense that the institution incurs. The DoF said, "*The major costs we have are the cafeteria and the students' residences due to breakages and carelessness that is happening down there" (*Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00). I have observed that in turn, the costs tend to be borne by the learners in the form of fee increases so as to take care of such incidents.

Raising fees tends to have implications for access and equity in the provision of higher education. Implicitly, if the vandalism and food waste are effectively managed, their impact on the operational budget would be reduced.

Parenting style (upbringing) may partly account for vandalism as the Dean suggests. He also tends to believe that the behaviour is an emergent phenomenon that has risen out of a wider social-cultural context than the immediate institutional context: *"I think we're coming from a culture that did not have these challenges when some of us were growing up"*. In other words, he finds the behaviour of the learners strange, a result of an evolving culture.

However, the phenomenon could also be due to an individual learner's psycho-biological factors. The phenomenon may also be interpreted as an emergent behaviour that results from the dynamic interactions among the agents within and outside the institution as the agents and institution co-evolve (Layder, as cited in Houston, 2010, p. 79). I explore these issues in Chapter Seven.

However, I have observed that vandalising institutional and personal property is one of the critical challenges that almost all educational institutions including higher education institutions in Malawi tend to face. In this case, it may be argued that there is a link between food wastage and vandalism and the fee structure (Comm & Mathaisel, 2007 and Zhu et al., 2011, p. 152).

Next I turn to other challenges that emerge in the institution concerning the social relationships among the learners. In the next two sections, I contextualise gossip and slander, and also family socio-economic background challenges that learners face in the institution.

6.2.1.3.5 Gossip and slander

Some of the learners tend to gossip and slander other learners especially in connection with intimate relationships. Student 2 (Interviewed on November 14, 2011 at 12h00) said:

> *When a lot of people don't have anything to do as it is a small campus, most of the time, they are gossiping. And then they create stories and just spread rumours…. In my first*

> *year, it affected me a lot. I was chatting with a boy and they said he is my boyfriend. And they said a lot of things. I was trying to make a relationship with someone as a friend, not a boyfriend… And this really affected me…. And people said this is what they do here. Just be yourself. So, that's what I am. It doesn't mean they have stopped talking. They still talk but I just ignore everything and forge ahead.*

The student attributes the practice to the size of the institution and idleness. She believes that because the institution is small (324 learners) and that some learners tend to have nothing meaningful to do they spend their time gossiping about perceived improper heterosexual relationships. Learners who were talked about tended to take the gossip badly more especially when it was false. As a result, they lived miserably. Rather than take the matter to the Chaplain whose role includes counseling, the learners gave each other pieces of advice on how to manage life on the campus.

The Chaplain said that few learners visited him for counseling. However, of the few learners, most often it was women who visited him. Furthermore, of those who visited him, the issues that learners brought up concerned interpersonal relationships that the learners experience, especially gossip and slander about heterosexual relationships (Interviewed on August 26, 2012 at 08h00). However, lack of interest in seeking counseling services may be interpreted as a lack of trust that the learners tended to have in the chaplaincy services. There was little evidence that the administration tended to be concerned with the challenges when reported by either the Chaplain or a learner. It seems that the leaders appeared to have not set high expectations of the staff and of learners (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Neither I nor the Chaplain inquired into the underlying cause of the challenge.

I observed that some learners indeed made up stories about improper heterosexual relationships. The institution at that time (2010) regulated heterosexual relationships. At one time, I served as a member of the disciplinary committee of the institution. The administrators asked the committee to investigate rumours of improper sexual affairs among the resident learners. We did not find evidence of acts of improper sexual relationships. Nevertheless, I demonstrate below, basing decisions on gossip and rumour was not peculiar to learners only. Data tend to show that even the patterns of social relationships among administrators, proprietors and followers tend to face rumour and gossip as a challenge (refer to Section 6.3.2.1.1 below).

In addition to gossip and slander about sexual relationships, another major challenge some of the learners face is the influence of the socio-economic background on social relationships and academic matters.

6.2.1.3.6 Learners' socioeconomic background challenge

The study also found that the interaction between some of the learners who come from families that are financially challenged and the learners who come from families that are financially sound tend to be strained. The learners from financially challenged families (I henceforth use the word poor to describe them) tend to associate with learners from similar family backgrounds and vice versa. In effect, the learners group themselves according to their families' socio-economic circumstances.

Some of the poor learners tend to covet what some of the learners from financially sound (I henceforth use the word rich to describe them) families possess such as expensive cell phones, lap tops, digital cameras and expensive clothes. In attempts to acquire what rich learners have, some of the poor learners engage in practices that are considered to be morally unacceptable in the institution (2010 Student Handbook), like stealing and prostitution. In some cases, some of the poor learners demand money from their parents on the pretext of purchasing required school materials. Yet when they acquire the gadgets, the rich learners ridicule them. As a result, some poor learners tend to view themselves as people who are not worthy of owning what the rich learners have.

In some case, some of the rich learners abstain from taking *nsima* or porridge made from maize flour. Or they collect the foodstuff and throw it away. They consider it to be food for the poor. Instead, they live off foodstuff and snacks which they buy and share with their friends. However, when poor learners take the meals (*nsima* and porridge), the rich learners mock and laugh at them. As a result, some of the poor learners tend to be shy and timid also abstaining from taking the meals. They live on an empty stomach because they cannot afford to buy food for themselves. The challenge tends to be more common among female learners. Student 2 said:

We have students who come from different families…. from rich families….from poor families. This creates a big gap between students because those… from rich families associate with those coming from rich families….those from poor families…with those from poor families. That is a problem because interaction is difficult because this [sic] people have their own things to do and they also have their things…. people from high-class families have expensive things and … poor families do not.

Now, people who are from poor families find their own ways of getting expensive things and they get into things like prostitution, also stealing. And those from rich families … try to say some bad things about the people who are from poor families as once they get a thing which is of high class, they start to gossip.

Some rich people always complain about food. They say that this food is bad, even if it is good. So, some people just join in and say the food is bad. So, when you eat, they laugh at you and you feel bad. Sometimes, you don't eat even if you want it and it is good. This is a challenge.

In addition, if a poor student performs well in class, some of the rich learners tend to mock them. The practice diminishes the self-worth of poor learners leading to loss of confidence in themselves. Student 2 described the situation as follows: *"Also, if they get some good marks in class, they speak badly about them. So, they feel demotivated because they feel like they are not supposed to get those things"*.

I found the report that Student 2 gave plausible. Four learners (two females and two males) narrated similar observations when I asked them. In other words, the pattern of social relationships among some of the learners in the institution tends to be based on socioeconomic factors. Learners from disadvantaged family backgrounds tend to be abused and mocked by learners from advantaged family background. The abuse then affects different dimensions of the lives of the learners, from material possessions and health to academic matters. It is also fair to conclude that some of the socioeconomic conditions in the institution influence learners who come from disadvantaged families to engage in morally unacceptable behaviour. In addition, learners with low self-esteem choose to go hungry as they pretend not to like *nsima* and maize porridge, yet they cannot provide for themselves.

Attempts to assist some of the poor learners to earn money face a major challenge: dishonesty and fraud. I contextualise these challenges in the section that follows.

6.2.1.3.7 Dishonesty and fraud

Another emergent challenge is unexplained dishonesty whereby some of the needy learners who are given work to do so as to raise funds to enable them to pay fees or support themselves, cheat on the institution. They claim more hours of work than the hours they have actually spent working. The practice effectively constrains the administrators from attending to the needs of some of the financially disadvantaged learners. On the other hand, the plight of the poor learners persists:

> *The supervisors (fellow learners) that you put in charge are not faithful. Someone will record 32 hours in a week. Then you will discover that for example, that person is working eight hours a day but that person is in class on that very day. So, you wonder, when they're in class, how can they be doing their work programme? Meanwhile, we have stopped it* (DoF, interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00).

I experienced similar behaviour when I worked in the institution. It was learners from disadvantaged family backgrounds who self-organised and contacted the administration to provide them with some work so as to earn money for fees. However, the majority of them tended to be dishonest in their claims or amount of work they had done. In some cases, they tended to collaborate with their supervisors and share the payment on such claims.

The Dean observed a discrepancy in the behaviour of some of the learners in that they were not only poor but also dishonest. His expectation is that the learners would appreciate the opportunity to work and earn money. It can be concluded that their being poor is not necessarily due to lack of opportunities to earn income. In other words, poverty may not only be due to lack of opportunities. Other mechanisms come into play. The Dean said:

> *There were some students that we put on a work programme but supervising them has been a problem. They end up cheating us and make huge claims on work that they didn't do. So, we have stopped this one. Some students are poor but dishonest too. They can rob you if they have a chance. That's very unfortunate, for sure, but that's what has been happening. Punching many hours in when they have not done the job. We just said - let's stop this meanwhile.*

One of the physically challenged and poor learners who was listed in the programme believed that he need not work to be financially assisted. As a Christian institution, the authorities should have sympathised with his condition and given him a living allowance to enable him to learn freely rather than require that he work for money. In other words, his condition should have attracted sympathy. I observed that he was partially paralysed. He could walk without any need of aid and was assigned to work in the cafeteria. Thus, the level of trust in the patterns of social relationships between some of the poor learners and the authorities in the institution tends to be low.

However, the despair that the authorities have resigned themselves to may be due to the fact that the institution faces financial challenges. In other words, the behaviour of the learners may be a morally acceptable excuse for abandoning the financial assistance programme. I did not obtain a clear explanation of how it was that the authorities gave up the whole programme rather than identify the perpetrators and work with individual learners so as to deal with their needs. That is, the authorities did not appear to have engaged in positive transformation of the learners into moral and ethical agents (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011 and Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011).

In addition, I did not inquire into why the authorities did not report the matter to the police. Perhaps, acting as parents of the learners, they decided to punish the learners by temporarily giving up the programme to allow themselves time to effectively deal with the challenge. Nonetheless, the authorities were so disillusioned that they halted the programme. Yet there were no other alternatives for obtaining financial aid. It could be argued that the leaders tended to be transactional [you perform, we pay] rather than transformational [share the vision, create a productive school culture, offer individual support and set higher expectations] (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Mulla & Krishnan, 2011).

It may be argued that the challenge that the institution faces in this case concerns moral identity. Hence there is a need for strong commitment to moral and ethical values that tend to motivate a person to respect or protect the welfare of others (Hart, Atkins & Ford, as cited in Zhu et al., 2011, p. 151).

6.2.1.4 Summary

This section has recontextualised the emergence of private higher education within the dynamic interactions of different agents in three environments: the macro-environment which exerts pressure on the Malawi government to increase access and equity in higher education; the meso-environment in which agents demand access to higher education from their government; and the micro-environment in which private higher education emerges from dynamic interaction between the agents and the social structures. Thus, by the time government invited the private sector to participate in providing higher education, private institutions of higher education were already in existence.

However, the liberalisation of higher education was not preceded by the necessary transformation of pre-existing social structures and systems in the MoEST to effectively facilitate the new development. As a result, one of the emergent challenges that the case institution faced concerned lack of clear processes that had to be followed in acquiring government accreditation.

In addition, some of the challenges that characterise the institution tend to arise from the patterns of social relationships of the members of the institution. These include secularisation, waste of resources, vandalism, prejudice against learners from disadvantaged family backgrounds, gossip and slander, dishonesty, frustration and despair.

In the following section, I recontextualise challenges emerging from dynamic interactions between agents in different positions in the hierarchy of the institution. In trying to make sense of the challenges, I interpret them from the perspective of the leadership and management behaviours, utilising the concepts of complexity and transformational leadership theories (see Section 6.0 above).

6.2.2 Complexity and transformational leadership theories

Hanna, Lord & Pearce (2011, p. 216) describe leadership as a process of social influence that contributes to the effectiveness of a group or an organisation. Complexity leadership concerns itself with the role that formal and informal leaders play in guiding the development and performance of an organisation (Hanna, Lord & Pearce, 2011, p. 216). Hanna, Lord & Pearce (2011) observe that such leadership behaviour tends to facilitate the adaptive processes that are connected with creativity, learning and emergence of structure in an organisation.

The aim of engaging in such leadership processes is to promote empowerment, encourage self-regulation, learning and shared leadership. In order for leaders to carry out such functions, they have to develop cognitive complexity. This refers to the ability to understand information flows within a system, content of information and the capacity to adjust to a variety of leadership approaches. Leaders shift leadership roles among group members depending on knowledge, skills, abilities, emotional temperament of the followers and ability to manage group interaction processes and other situational demands (p. 216).

From the CT perspective, complexity leaders tend to manipulate informal networks through intentional interactions with constituent agents of a system so as to generate and address the adaptive needs of a system. In other words, complexity leadership seeks to surface and work with informal leadership processes for the good of the organisation rather than to suppress or eliminate them (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 646). This is because, according to Lincoln (1982, as quoted in Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 644), "Informal networks are indispensable to organisational function, and supervisors must learn to manipulate them". In other words, it is the network that has to be manipulated, not the people. It has to be observed as well that complexity leadership in this sense, tends to be more concerned with the integration of administrative and adaptive (informal) leadership processes for the attainment of the goals of an organisation (Hanna & Arros, 2011).

However, complexity leadership tends to ignore concern for transforming individual followers into becoming creative and innovative individuals who can make and carry out their own decisions. In summary, transformational leaders view themselves as embodiments of moral and ethical values that their organisations espouse. They formulate a broad purpose [vision] based on consensus and articulate and share it with their subordinates in their organisation. They set goals that are consistent with the vision, encourage the subordinates to internalize the vision and the goals and make their own decisions when necessary, in dealing with the challenges as they perform their duties. In addition, transformational leaders persuade, rather than coerce, subordinates to achieve more than they expect by working with individual subordinates on their personal and professional needs to enable them to become what they would like to be both personally and professionally. The leaders admit when they are wrong and are willing to change the decisions they made given new circumstances or evidences. In other words, transformational leaders are ethical and moral in their dealings with subordinates (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Mulla & Krishnan, 2011) (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.12).

Therefore, I also drew on transformational leadership theory in addition to CT to reinterpret the challenges and to surface causal links that tend to generate and condition the challenges. In the following sections, I recontextualise governance and institutional management practices. Data show that the institution faces governance and management challenges.

6.2.2.1 Authoritarian management and leadership behaviour

One of the challenges that characterises the institution is that leadership and management behaviour tends to manifest authoritarian[9] tendencies at governance, administrative and departmental levels.

6.2.2.1.1 Governance level

The study findings reveal that one of the major challenges that the institution faces is governance. It is characterised by low levels of interaction between the proprietor and the managers of the institution, mistrust, suspicion and indifference. I contextualise the challenge by utilising complexity and transformational leadership conceptual frameworks.

6.2.2.1.1.1 Collaboration and interdependence

[9] Authoritarian leaders are very directive and allow no participation in decision-making, structure complete work situation for their subordinates, take full authority and assume full responsibility of work from initiation to task completion (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 125)

The data show that the level of collaboration and interdependence between the institution and the proprietors is low which undermines the possibility of more sustainable development of the institution (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Mason, 2009). This is how the VC (November 10, 2011, at 15h00) responded to one of the questions:

> ***Question:*** *Could you, please, also elaborate on the relationship between the institution and the church leaders at the head office?*
> ***Answer***
> *The relationship we have with [the proprietor] is such that we are not pulling together. Reason? Maybe because we have not sat down together to agree on the path of the university. We accept that the university has got ideals which we must follow and we cannot bend. We cannot change and we cannot do otherwise. As a result, we operate on different wavelengths and are often in unnecessary conflict. The (proprietor) is not open…. They (sic) like to do their things in secret based on rumours, gossip and lies. This creates a frustrating situation* (VC, interviewed on November 10, 2011, at 15h00).

The administrators in the institution believe that there are certain aspects of the university which the proprietor does not want and would like to change. However, the administrators in the institution hold the view that university ideals are immutable. Some of the ideals are that people who teach in a university and the learners who are admitted into a university ought to be appropriately qualified. In that way, quality would be assured or else the university would find it difficult to continue to operate competitively. However, the VC appears not to be ready to discuss and communicate the vision and the goals of the institution and persuade the proprietors to share in the values (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011). He is confrontational and unwilling to bargain.

On the other hand the proprietors think that anyone can teach in a university. That is, they do not have a broad purpose for the institution. Therefore, the decisions they make are based on a different vision from the one the institution has (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). As a result, proprietors transferred excess employees from other institutions in the organisation to the university. The VC observed:

> *And you see, there are times when the (proprietor) thinks that anybody who cannot be employed anywhere else- that the university has got the room. And that is not fair because those people are not appropriately qualified for university teaching. And as a result,*

> *they're lowering the standards. When they lower the standards, our ability to compete with other universities will go down.*

However, I found out that people whom the proprietors transfer to the university are appropriately qualified. Some of them had been teaching at the institution as adjunct teachers while they were working in their employing organisations. The participant failed to substantiate the information. Possibly, the issue was that the proprietors did not authentically consult the administration when they wanted to transfer someone to the institution. The administrators unwillingly accepted the orders from the proprietors on these matters. That is, the proprietor resorts to coercion rather than persuasion (Hastings & Shaffer, 2008 and Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2008). The values of the proprietors and the administrators therefore clash.

The employees the VC was referring to were people who held administrative positions in the hierarchy of the sponsoring church. When their term of office expired, they had to be redeployed into various other institutions in the organisation. Due to their academic qualifications, they were redeployed to the university. In this case, therefore, the VC's observation was incorrect. Nevertheless, it appears that the proprietor and the VC hold conflicting visions, values and beliefs about the institution. The weak relationship that exists between the proprietor and the institution is closely linked to the clash between the vision, values and beliefs that both the VC and the proprietor espouse have internalized. As a result, each party makes decisions based on incompatible visions and values (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011).

The two parties also manifest different levels of authoritarian attitudes based on perceived levels of a sense of a threat to security (Hastings & Shaffer, 2008). According to Hastings & Shaffer (2008), authoritarian behaviour is an adaptive response to a threatening environment (p. 425). The VC appears to believe that the practices would weaken the institution's potential to adapt to its environment. It would not be able to effectively compete for learners so as to survive. On the other hand, the proprietors fail to sense a threat to survival. As a result, there is little interdependence between the two agents (Mason, 2009). In addition, it appears that the VC is a leader who is not familiar with management practices in which the institution is embedded. He therefore misinterprets the redeployment of employees to the institution as an attempt by the proprietor to weaken the institution.

6.2.2.1.1.2 Lack of consultation

There is also a lack of consultation between the proprietors and the administrators. This may result from low adaptive and administrative complexity leadership behaviour. Both adaptive and administrative leadership behaviours facilitate the development of an environment in which informal and formal dynamic interaction take place. That is, the behaviours tend to promote and foster open effective communication and the free flow of information in an organisation.

It may also be due to a lack of skills or interest by the proprietors in developing people by demonstrating high performance and expectation (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The proprietors make decisions that affect the institution without consulting the administrators. The VC tends to believe that the proprietors base the decisions on rumours, gossip and lies that they have collected about the institution. He said:

> *This year in January with a new administration, we said the same thing that we were going to meet monthly, but we haven't been able to meet monthly. Now, when you don't meet monthly or when you don't meet at all, it means you can't manage together. It means you make decisions from rumours, from gossip and sometimes from lies because you have not sat down to sort out the problem together* (VC Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00).

He does not challenge the decisions or ask for the basis for the decisions. In other words, the level of interaction and interdependence among the agents in the system is low. That is, the decisions that are made tend to be in conflict with the vision and the goals of the institution (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The conflicts result from a lack of common goals and approach to issues that emerge in the system. In other words, there are no adequate structures to foster dynamic interaction and participation in decision-making to enable collective support for decisions (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011). Hence, the VC is frustrated and disillusioned. He does not deal with the gossip, rumours and lies that he alleges the proprietors use.

The attitudes of the new proprietors are similar to those of their predecessors: they are similarly uncooperative. They suspect that the VC intends to secularise the institution. However, they do not set a direction or work with the VC so as to raise his consciousness and awareness of the beliefs and the values that the proprietor expects him to uphold and promote (Leithwood & Sun, 2012, pp. 400 – 401). Instead, the proprietor chooses not to cooperate thereby weakening the mutual relationship and level of trust. Proprietor 1 said:

> *It appears since he has worked for a long time with secular universities, he was also trying to divert our university into those other secular ones. So, we were afraid that if we let him stay there for another term we could lose our focus.*

The behaviour of the proprietors whereby they avoid openly dealing with the suspicion and perceptions they hold about the VC may also be influenced by the authoritarian organisational culture in the institution. That is, there is little evidence of efforts to raise the awareness and consciousness of the leaders in the institution to a higher level of conduct and performance based on intellectual stimulation (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The Chancellor blamed the administrators for the behaviour and accused them of attempting to secularise the institution. He did not offer to deal with the challenge. That is, he was not willing to be held accountable for the well-being of the institution, as a steward of the members of the institution.

The Chancellor affirms a large power distance[10] between himself and the Vice Chancellor and demonstrates it publicly. Also, he tends to manifest authoritarian tendencies characterised by a lack of interpersonal acceptance and a collective approach in dealing with challenges that arise in the system. He distances himself, does not empathise and initiate collective action (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011, p. 481). It can further be argued that the Chancellor appears to hold a linear view of social practices rather than seeing them as emergent phenomena that manifest themselves in nonlinear systems (Agar, 1999, p. 2). He also tends to manifest strong authoritarian aggressive behaviour, a phenomenon that is characterised by a tendency to look out for people who fail to conform to conventional norms so as to condemn and punish them (Roiser & Willig, 2002, p. 76).

[10] "Power distance refers to the 'extent to which less powerful members of organisations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally'" (Hofstede & Bond, as quoted in Rinne, Steel & Fairweather, 2012, p. 96).

Nevertheless, there is a lack of open effective interpersonal and organisational communication (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). That is, there is little evidence of efforts to raise the awareness and consciousness of the leaders in the institution to a higher level of conduct and performance based on intellectual stimulation (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Hence, the administrators experience a sense of loss and despair. They do not know what to do because of a lack of communication. That is, the level of interaction between them is low. Therefore, they resort to guessing what the proprietors think or plan to do. The VC (ibid.) states, "*I can't understand how they work because there's no communication. All I have to do is just guess. It's better be open and honest*".

6.2.2.1.1.3 Suspicion and mistrust

One other challenge that emerges from the lack of complexity leadership behaviour is suspicion. The administrators of the institution suspect that the proprietors do not appreciate the role that the university plays and would play in the human resource development needs in the sponsoring church. They consider it a competitor. Therefore, the proprietors work to weaken the institution thereby making it potentially unable to compete with other institutions. They consider the behaviour of the proprietor to be different from the behaviour and attitude of parents toward their children. Parents (normally) care for their children (DoF, interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00). Therefore, the attitude of the proprietors towards the institution is strange in that they shun responsibility and accountability. The VC (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00) had this to say:

> *Another thing the (proprietor) does not look at the university as an institution which will develop capacity in terms of chaplains, teachers, accountants and supervisors. They [sic] look at it as a competitor rather than a child of their own. When they see it as a competitor, then they'll try to reduce its power.*

This indifferent attitude that the VC alleges tends to be supported by what the DoF observed. She said that that the institution was like an abandoned child who should provide for itself so as to be healthy and to grow (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00). In other words, governance in the institution is a challenge because the proprietors do not appear to take responsibility for enabling the institution's growth and development.

Head 2 holds a similar opinion. He thinks that the proprietors do not match words with action. They motivate people into action, but when the people ask for money to do what they told them to do, the leaders say they do not have money. They are surprised that the people demand money. He therefore concludes that the institution faces financial challenges because the leaders did not plan well. He said:

> *You know, our leaders like to just talk but when you say, let's now do it, they tell you we have no money. Then you say, "Then why did we open the school if we have no money? We cannot build a good university if we rely on fees alone". Our leaders need to come up with ways of finding money but when you talk of money, they begin to wonder as if you are talking about strange things. So, poor planning. Our leaders did not plan well* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 12h00).

In other words, the proprietors lack foresight, described as an ability to foresee or know the likely outcome of a situation by comparing current events with projections of events (Savaya & Spiro, 2011, p. 14). In addition, the leaders fail to model ethical behaviour by keeping promises (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

From my experience, the observation that the proprietors initiate a project but fail to fund it is correct. In the planning process, the leaders tend not to seriously consider the financial implications of the project that they intend to embark on. For example, Minute 85 of the Board of Trustees, held on Friday, September 12, 2003 from 09h to 11h30, shows that the institution would carry out a three-phase infrastructure development project. The first phase would start in 2004 and the third and last phase would end in 2007. The entire project was estimated to cost USD480, 000.00 (USD1 was worth Malawi Kwacha 109.25). The proprietors expected to acquire the funds from private donors and church members (2003 Board Minutes, Friday, September 12, 2003). However, there is no evidence that the proprietors submitted any proposal for funding to any donor organisation or individual outside the sponsoring church organisation. It is possible that the proprietors expected the administrators of the institution to engage in sourcing funds. In other words, there is little interdependence.

By the time the institution opened in January 2004, the proprietors donated one million Malawi Kwacha (USD9, 153.32) as part of the operating income to enable the administrators to get the institution ready for opening. The rest of the needed funds for the operation of the institution in the course of the year were to come from learners' fees and other unspecified sources. The total proposed operation budget for the year 2004 was estimated to be MK7, 786,000.00 (USD71, 267.73) (2004 Proposed Budget). However, drawing on my experience, I would suggest that the institution failed to raise the required amount.

It is equally correct that the proprietors tend to be surprised when the people they have engaged demand funds for a project. I learned from my experience in working with the proprietors that they prefer being listened to and deferred to rather than having their ideas challenged. It is less likely that the proprietors consciously work to weaken the institution and view it as a competitor. Rather, they fail to demonstrate stewardship, that is, a willingness to accept responsibility for the development of the institution (Savaya & Spiro, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

It may be argued that complex adaptive systems operate in open systems in which social practices tend to be nonlinear (Mason, 2009). Therefore, future outcomes of social practices may be different from original intentions (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.5.1). However, nonlinearity in most cases tends to refer to attempts to predict long-term outcomes of social practices in a system (Byrne, 2005 and Mason, 2009). In this case, planning refers to making available beforehand appropriate facilities, resources and infrastructure to fit the purpose for which a system is established (Savaya & Spiro, 2011, pp. 12 – 15 and Van Dierendonck, 2011, 1234). Proprietor 2 (Interviewed July 27, 2012, at 15h00) said:

> *There're many challenges but one of them is accommodation for students, especially boys. I can't say there's accommodation there. This is a challenge because the houses are not fit for a university student. But this is because we don't have money. No person want (sic) our children to live in such houses. They are not good houses.*

It may be argued therefore that the proprietors may not necessarily consider the institution as a competitor. Rather, the institution lacks adequate appropriate initial structures, facilities and resources. I observed that the proprietors, as clergy, tended to be more interested in managing the churches than the institutions.

It can further be argued, that the structure of the relationship between the institution and the proprietors tend to be substantial and internal but "asymmetrically necessary", that is, the church as an organisation can exist without the institution but not vice versa (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 46). The connection between the goals of the church and the institution is weak, (see Section 6.3.2.1.1.4 below) therefore, the interdependence between the two is equally weak. The attitude of the proprietors is closely associated with the perception that the proprietors have of the institution. In the next chapter, I explore further explanations for the behaviour of the proprietors.

6.2.2.1.1.4 Lack of dynamic interaction

The other challenge is the low level of interaction among the proprietors, the members of the Council and administrators in the institution (Refer to Section 6.3.2.1.1 2 above). As Proprietor 2 says, the level of interaction is such that it is weak and unlikely to bring about desirable outcomes (see the quotation below). The members of the institution become aware of the existence of the Council only through the decisions that it makes. Implicitly, the members of the Council are not personally familiar and do not engage with the challenges that the institution faces. They tend to fail to manifest stewardship over the institution, that is, the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of an institution by operating in the service of those entrusted to them (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). It is likely that the Council avoids taking responsibility for the challenges that the institution faces by persuading the staff to set high standards to perform better than they expect in dealing with the challenges (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011). As a defense mechanism, the Council refrains from interacting with the administrators.

The decisions that the Council makes tend to be communicated formally. Proprietor 2 said:

> *I think that the relationship between the Council and the university community is dormant. It is sterile because there are no occasions when there is any interaction between the Council members and the university community or management team. So, the impact of the Council is only seen in decisions but not in mixing with them or interacting with them because there's not an occasion where I have seen interaction* (Interviewed July 27, 2012, at 15h00).

That the Council resorts to control rather than fostering occasions for collective creativity and reflexivity to take place through dynamic interactions (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 642) is seen in what one of the proprietors said. As one of the proprietors, he tends to espouse being impersonal and calculating rather than being informal and dynamic in the way he approaches issues of governance. For example, Proprietor 2 says that he only deals with issues that are formally tabled when the Council is in session because the agendas for the meetings are prepared by

> *other authorities. I'm just a member there. So, I give my input on the things that I am provided. My contributions come from the budget and other financially-related issues brought by those … making up the agenda* (Interviewed on July 27 2012, 15h00).

He is secretive and therefore, does not even mention who prepares the agenda. He refers to them as "other authorities" apart from himself as an authority too. Furthermore, although he is one of the proprietors, he does not try to find out what items comprise the agenda for the Council. He waits until the agenda is tabled for discussion. In so doing, he avoids playing an active leadership role. This behaviour could be interpreted as lacking in moral courage in that he avoids modeling desirable behaviour and it would seem that as a leader he lacks the willingness to admit mistakes and change practices in the face of new understanding and circumstances (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The behaviour also indicates that the relationship among the members of the Council tends to be weak. I sought the possible underlying causes in Chapter Seven by drawing on the theory of cultural values by Hofstede (1997).

I observed that the secretary only produces the agenda immediately before the Council is called to order. It can be argued therefore, that Proprietor 2 and other members for that matter come to the Council not knowing what the agenda is and are therefore unprepared. In other words, despite the fact that the institution faces diverse challenges, as he says below, there is little adaptive dynamic interaction among the constituent agents of the system.

The findings also strongly indicate that the Council does not play an active role in dealing with the challenges that the institution faces as the following interview data shows:

> ***Question:*** *Can you, please, tell me the role that the University Council plays in dealing with the challenges that you have mentioned?*
> ***Answer****: In most universities, the issue of governance goes to the Council every year. The issue of quality goes to the Council every year. The issue of wage factors goes to the Council every year because these three are important: Quality, finance and governance.*

> *Without these three being discussed, we cannot go very far in the university. But that's not the case with us here. [They] like to do their things in secret based on rumours, gossip and lies as I said* (VC, interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00).

The word "*they*" in this case, refers to the proprietors. The VC believes the problem is that the Council mostly comprises ex-officio members who, in this case, are mostly clergymen. They keep their views about the institution to themselves. There is a lack of open and effective organisational communication (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011) and as such, there tends to be a gap between the views of the proprietors and of the administrators. As a result, the administrators find it difficult to deal with the challenges that the institution faces. Judging by my experience, I concur with the VC in this case.

For example, I observed that the institution had been without a Vice Chancellor for over eight months at the time I wrote this chapter. The previous Vice Chancellor gave notice of his intention not to renew his contract seven months before it expired (Letter dated May 29, 2011). For almost a year, it has had acting heads of department in the two of the three academic departments. As Teacher 3 says, "*As an institution now, we have a leadership crisis whereby we're not sure who is our leader. There's no leader. Everyone is acting. We have acting vice chancellor, acting head of theology, and acting head of education*".

Although the Council met on July 20, 2012, the issues concerning the office of the Vice Chancellor and debate on the appointment of heads of academic departments were not on the agenda. In other words, governance is a huge challenge. It can be argued therefore, that lack of dynamic interaction between the VC and the proprietors could not be due to the leadership and management behaviour of the VC, otherwise the proprietors and the Council could have acted expeditiously to manage the vacancy. Neither could the situation be attributed to the proprietors. The governance situation could have changed when "*new administration*" (VC Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00) assumed office. In other words, the governance challenge has persisted in spite of the coming in of a new Chancellor and the departure of the previous Vice Chancellor.

However, from my work experience both as a principal and a teacher in different educational institutions in the sponsoring organisation, I observed that the proprietors provided minimum support to heads of institutions. In most of the Management Board and in the Council meetings that I attended as a member and an observer, the proprietors tactfully avoided discussing the challenges that an institution faced. This was particularly the case if the challenges had financial implications. The proprietors would simply say the issue required more time and further study. Even though they would set a time to discuss the challenge or suggest when the administrator should submit the agenda again, there tends to be little commitment and support of the auspice organisation management.

In some cases the proprietors referred the challenges back to the head of the institution. Sometimes the head would be required to report on how he intended to deal with the challenge, the resources he would need and how he would acquire the resources. In other words, the administrative and adaptive function of the leadership processes in governance tends to be weak. The practice may be frustrating to a person who is unfamiliar with the organisational culture, as is the case here. It can be argued, as I indicated above, that the proprietors tend to lack requisite skills and the commitment to manage subsystems other than church systems. The challenge is closely linked to the lack of governance structures and systems. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a lack of a legal basis and effective structures (committees, policies, guidelines, etc.) for holding the proprietors responsible and accountable for the way the institution is operated and managed. As a result, the sustainability potential of the institution tends to be weak (Savaya & Spiro, 2011, p. 12 – 15). In Chapter Eight, I explore the possible underlying cause(s) of these practices.

6.2.2.1.2 Administrative level

It is not only in governance that the institution faces challenges in so far as consultation is concerned. Findings indicate that some of the members in the top management team also experience systemic challenges that emerge from the weak dynamic interactions and interdependence in the team.

One of the participants, the DoF, reported giving up in despair his attempts to have interpersonal conflict resolved because the other leaders would not listen and act on the matter. The behaviour may be a manifestation of a desire to maintain a strong power distance between a leader and a subordinate so as to create space for exercising power, control and a demonstration of toughness (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 644). The leaders avoid dealing with individual needs of subordinates so as to experience a sense of self-worth (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). To survive in such an environment, some of the subordinate members in the team tend to keep their concerns to themselves. They withdraw from consulting others in decision-making processes. The DoF said:

> *I can't share those (issues) because you know even if I share them they won't be heard or they will be heard but not acted upon. I share my observations. I was called for consultations and I think for two or three times, and then it ended. Then I decided, I'll never do another consultation* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00).

The decision to withdraw is linked to low level interactions and lack of authentic communication between the leaders and their subordinates. Therefore, some of the subordinates carry out their duties in the way that they see fit possibly to keep their jobs and achieve their goals. In other words, the agents tend to decrease the level of dynamic interaction and interdependence between themselves and the authorities. The Volunteer said:

> *It became difficult to work with the Administration because of a lack of transparency, and of their making promises and not keeping them. We could not get an accounting of the funds that we had turned in. About $17,000.00 was turned in but we could only get an accounting for $12,000 (approx.). I found it necessary to establish a bank account. This enabled me to keep tabs on funds received and to have ready access to funds.*

In other words, the participant lost confidence in the administration of the institution in so far as the management of funds was concerned for lack of transparency and accountability. There is also suspicion and mistrust.

6.2.2.1.2.1 Mistrust and fear

The followers tend not to trust the administrators. For example, as reported earlier, two of the members of the institution turned down my invitation to participate in the research. One of them wanted to know what I would do with the data. When I told her that I would process and use it in my report, she declined the invitation. Although I assured her of anonymity, she was still afraid that she might be identified and consequently, be punished.

The other participant inquired if the administration knew of my project. When I said yes, she then declined participating. I wanted to know why. She said if the administrators knew that she was telling me anything about the institution, she could be punished. I tried to let her arrange where we could meet for the interview and I would be responsible for the cost in terms of transport. However, she said, *"There's no secret on earth. An ant will hear and report them"*. An ant in this case meant a secret informer. In other words, she believed that the administrators had certain individuals who were spying on others (Teacher 2 expresses similar suspicion below). I was not sure if their fears were genuine. I interpreted their refusal to participate in the study as strong evidence that the authorities tend to suppress informal communication rather than surface it (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009), prevent subordinates from making their own decisions, and tend to be threatened by differences in opinion (Hastings & Shaffer, 2009 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). They tend to feel unsafe (see Chapter Seven).

6.2.2.1.2.2 Decision- making processes

Authoritarian practices also tend to manifest themselves in the way in which authorities conduct meetings for decision-making. The agenda is not circulated ahead of time to enable the members to reflect on them. Possibly, the authorities fear that the members of the committee would discuss and agree on a decision before the meeting. Therefore, the authorities want to surprise the members. In other words, the leaders use their influence not to raise followers to higher individual needs like self-esteem and self-actualisation, but to control followers (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

In some cases, a decision on the issues that ought to be discussed may have already been made and communicated to the people concerned by some members of the top management well in advance of the meeting. In such cases, the leaders impose the decision on the members in the process of the meeting as the DoF said:

> *You come for meetings and people have already heard what they ought to do. So, they just come to the meeting to discuss issues which have already been concluded. This is why we are saying, even if I call for a meeting, will it achieve any objective?* (DoF, Interviewed on October 04, 2011, at 15h00)

I experienced a case in which the management committee was called to discuss the appointment of an assistant to the head of department of one of the student support services departments. When a member remarked that the person had already been appointed, the chairperson said the person was just acting, pending confirmation. However, he refused to let the committee appoint a different person because the action "would embarrass the incumbent", the person under discussion.

One of the members of the Admission Committee said the committee had not met for over a year. Yet she kept seeing new learners on the campus each semester. When I asked her why the Committee had not been meeting, her opinion was that the authorities may not have liked the "Committee because sometimes the children of their relatives or friends had been rejected because they did not qualify" (Assistant 2, interviewed April 14, 2012 at 16h00). I concur with the observation. While I was working in the institution, I knew of some learners who had been admitted although they did not fully qualify for admission into the academic programmes in which they were enrolled.

In one of the written reports, possibly to the proprietors, the Volunteer who had invested most heavily in the transformation of the infrastructure observed that leadership behaviour tended to be characterised by authoritarian tendencies, suspicion and lack of interpersonal acceptance (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, 644). The Volunteer wrote:

> *The VC seems unable to work with someone who has a differing opinion. When bids were being taken for the electrical contract for the Ladies Hostel, "his friends" bid was about 200,000 above the others, though their qualifications appeared equal. He seemed to hold this against me, though I was not aware of it at that time. When I sensed this, I went to see him but he just brushed me off. He said he had no time for me. I tried on several occasions but he totally refused to have the matter resolved* (Document signed, n.d.)

So, it is not only the proprietors who fail to consult the administrators. Data show that even the administrators do not consult each other before a decision is made. In addition, there are certain administrators who are members of a privileged group from which other administrators are excluded. In other words, the administrative team is divided. Furthermore, the administrators fail to demonstrate moral and ethical leadership. They tend to use people as the means to achieve goals. As a result, members of one administrative team refuse to cooperate with members of the other team. In other words, there is little interdependence among the administrators. The DoF observed:

> *There're things that happen and you don't even know. You only get to know it because there's a requisition for money. And you say, but when was this decision made? So, even the consultation of management is done only before the Administration Committee has been called. These are some of the things of which you're not even part of* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00).

As the following data further illustrates, the administrators also do not consult or communicate the decisions they have taken to relevant members of the institution in the lower levels of the hierarchy. This practice tends to frustrate the members who are affected by the decision. The Supervisor reported it to be one of the major challenges that the institution faces:

> *We cultivated the whole of that area, ready to plant maize, just waiting for rain. One morning, what do I see? A bull dozer clearing the whole area for a sports field. Well, that is good. We need football. But why not tell us? Money has been paid. Fertilizer and maize seed has been secure [sic]. All in vain? It's terrible here. Very terrible. It's painful. This administration, no. We can't progress. Now you think we can work hard? No way, no way* (Interviewed on April 14, 2012, 15h00).

The Supervisor found the behaviour painful. He wished he has been warned not to cultivate the garden because the site was to be put to different use. The incident aroused him emotionally. Consequently, he expressed anger against the administration and doubted his commitment to working hard. The leadership therefore tends to fail to facilitate the realization of a shared vision and to entrust people to do what is necessary for the institution by demonstrating supportive behaviour and sharing information with followers (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

It may be concluded that consultation is a motivator apart from material compensation for the Supervisor to work hard or not. In this case, although the administrators' failure to consult the Supervisor did not affect his wages, the Supervisor nevertheless doubted the use of working hard. Thus, leaders in the institution are inclined to fail to nurture systemic thinking and to empower members to act in support of the survival of the institution. That is, the leaders fail to model mutual respect, trust and collaboration (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). As the findings show, the leadership behaviour tends to foster fragmented interpersonal relationships and a lack of a strong sense of interdependence (see Section 6.3.2.1.2.3 below).

6.2.2.1.2.3 Work relationships

The authoritarian leadership and management behaviour also manifests itself in fragmented work relationships that are characterised by lack of trust and interdependence and unhealthy competition. According to the DoF (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00), the challenges that the institution face may be due to the lack of collective effort towards dealing with them. The DoF said:

> *The relationship generally in this institution is not a team spirit that I experience. There's 'you do your job and I do mine'. And I think maybe that's why we have these problems. There are a few departments really where we pull together and we work together but other departments are 'you do your work and I do mine'.*

Fragmented relationship behaviours also tend to manifest themselves in the way the learners view the administration, as seen from the perspective of leaders of the learners' body. As the following piece of data shows, the administration did not tell the responsible learners where the item had been taken to for repair. When it was brought back, the administration did not report it. The Learners' Representative said:

> *We have a network problem that has got to do with the Internet. So, they took that into Lilongwe … or maybe it was to Blantyre and, I don't know, it's just a rumour that they brought the thing back and that any time from now, the thing will start working. When I went there they said that they're going to give us feedback. I'm still waiting up to now. Also, if we want a person to be an SRC member there's no communication as to what the qualifications are if a person wants to stand as president. No student knows about that.*

It can be concluded that the administrators tend to be secretive. There are few effective communication feedback loops. As the Representative says in the above excerpt, "*When I went there they said that they're going to give us feedback. I'm still waiting up to now*". Learners are kept in the dark about the Internet. Hence, the leadership and management behaviour tends to emphasise control rather than encourage self-regulation and empowerment by sharing information through effective communication (Hannah et al., 2011, p. 216 and Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011, pp. 481 - 482). Thus, secrecy tends to lead to speculation and rumour mongering as the Representative claims. The VC complained of the same phenomenon in Section 6.3.2.1.1.4 above.

6.2.2.1.2.4 Top-down control

The findings show that one of the challenges that the institution is facing is the lack of interdependence and shared goals. As I have demonstrated above in Section 4.1.2 on leadership behaviour, data show that the institution is characterised by fragmented interpersonal relationships, lack of consultation, suspicion and unhealthy competition. As a result, one of the challenges that the institution faces is weak control over the members of the institution. For example, Teacher 2 (Interviewed on October 06, 2011, at 16h00) said:

> *The greatest challenge is the dictatorial type of leadership that I think we're going through. There're things you're just told, "This is what has been discussed. Do it this way". There are things that you can also share and that you should also give your views or opinion on, but they are just told to you as a directive. You cannot even discuss it.*

Teacher 2 believes that he should be given an opportunity to share his views on things that he should do. However, it is not possible to discuss the directive because it originates from the "higher organisation", that is, the proprietor: *"But you find the VC tells you things and he says this has come from the higher organisation"*. Thus is seems that the institution lacks systems, structures and policies that allow for information to flow across hierarchical boundaries to enable agents to make effective decisions (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Centralised control and position power tend to suppress the adaptive function of the institution (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 644). They weaken members' sense of self-worth and self-esteem (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011). In other words, leaders tend to use their influence not to enable followers to be what they are capable of becoming. Instead of persuasion, the leaders tend to coerce compliance and obedience (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011, p. 481).

The teacher does not like this leadership behaviour. He considers the behaviour disrespectful of his individuality and self-worth. He suspects that either the proprietors or the administrators or both have planted secret informers - *"eyes"* - who report on others. He does not dispute, question or challenge the directives for fear of reprisal (I deal with the issue of fear of reprisal in Chapter Seven). He does not know why the originator of the directives wants things done that way and not otherwise. The only way to survive in such an environment is to obey and remain silent:

> *You only have to follow. There is a fear of reprisal and you can't say anything because you don't know. Maybe people have eyes around here. When someone is dictating to you and is not around, you are not sure what has made them do so. So, the only way to deal with it is to remain silent.*

He tends to view the practice as transient. The dictatorial leadership behaviour would possibly come to an end of its own accord.

From my experiences working in the organisation, it is true that people who question directives or instructions get punished sooner or later even if the authorities had given permission to have the issue discussed. In other words, leaders tend to use their influence not as an enabling power for subordinates to reach the highest possible goals in their lives, rather, it is used to control the led. The perceived threat to personal survival in both the leaders and the led appear to be the overarching concern in the institution. People tend to fear for their lives. Thus, instead of dealing with the challenges that the institution faces, for instance, lack of adequate facilities, staff, infrastructure and teaching-learning materials, both the leaders and the subordinates tend to focus more on threats to their lives.

The suspicion that administrators may have secret informers appears to be correct. In the following quotation, the respondent says the VC made a decision that was based on false information that an informer submitted about the writer. Instead of the VC verifying the matter with the writer, the VC just acted:

> *I am going to consult the Chancellor on exactly what I ought to do. I am going to do this because I have lost trust in you because of the untrue stories by unreliable persons that have informed you that I just appointed courses myself without having a meeting with the*

> *Department. Whoever told you those stories is not fair to me. This is one way of spoiling relations among faculty members. You make me suspicious of fellow departmental faculty members* (Office Memo, dated 14th September, 2011).

I have observed that the practice of keeping quiet over undesirable leadership behaviour tends to be one of the common approaches in Malawi of dealing with leadership challenges. It tends to be the case more especially in a situation in which the victims believe that the risk of asserting their authority outweighs the consequences of their action. However, many believe that good as well as bad leadership behaviour is transient. Therefore, what is needed is to patiently endure undesirable leadership behaviours rather than suffer the consequences which might ensue from challenging them.

Furthermore, I also observed in this institution that when the administrators wanted a certain task done but they suspected that some members would suggest something different if they were given the freedom to discuss it, they tended to allege that the task was a directive from head office. For instance, the administrators wanted one of the systems of the institution to start offering a nursing programme leading to a degree. The degree would be offered by a university with which the institution is affiliated. To have the system offer the nursing programme, the administrators said the Malawi government had written to the university asking why the university was delaying offering the nursing programme.

However, investigation into the allegation revealed that the Malawi government had never at any time written to the university. We informally inquired to find out if it was true that the university had received a letter from the Government of Malawi in which the government had requested the institution to offer the programmes but the institution said they had never received any communication to that effect. What the administrators wanted was to motivate the teachers to work harder and implement the programme quickly. In other words, it is common in this institution for the administrators to appeal to a higher authority so as to have people carry out certain tasks which the administrators want done either quickly or without changes or modifications (Hastings & Shaffer, 2009, 431). That is, the leaders fail to embody virtue or transform subordinates to moral agents who are motivated by higher needs to achieve their fullest potential in life (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011, p. 130 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Suspicion, fear and mistrust tend to be perceived as a threat to personal rather than institutional survival (Hastings & Shaffer, 2009).

However, the authoritarian behaviour also manifests itself at departmental level where patterns of relationships are severely affected.

6.2.2.1.3 Departmental level

At departmental level, a lack of complex administrative leadership behaviour manifests itself in the form of patronising practices. As Teacher 3 (Interviewed on October 06, 2011, at 12h00) pointed out, there are times when one person's ideas or suggestions on matters that concern the department are dismissed or ignored without an explanation. He attributed the attitude to seniority in age and level of education. He said:

> *The challenge in this institution is why they employ these old people in big positions? Whatever you suggest in meetings they just laugh and say, "I know what you mean. That's all". When you demand an answer they say, "I'll tell you".*

When I asked him why he could not insist on being answered, he said, *"Now, in African culture, you don't corner an old person. So, you just give up (he laughs)"*. Because of cultural values and norms, he avoids challenging the behaviour for fear of being perceived to be disrespectful of elderly people (Hofstede, 1997). In other words, if the person were a peer, he would have possibly challenged him/her. He believed that most of the meetings in the departments, even at the top management level, were not productive because elderly people did not want to listen to the young members. Instead, in most cases, older people demanded being listened to. The leaders fail therefore to deal with some of the personal needs of the followers, such as the need to be respected and be valued (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Hence the decisions that are made lack input from diverse perspectives from heterogeneous agents in the system (Mason, 2009 and Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

In this case, it can be said that some of the factors that affect decision-making processes and influence outcomes are cultural norms that govern social interactions. It may not be the age of the person per se but the norms that age tends to be associated with. The culture tends to be characterised by a strong power distance, that being "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisation within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 28).

6.2.2.2 Summary

It can be argued that the challenges that the institution faces are agential, structural and systemic in nature. They are closely linked to high levels of authoritarian attitudes on the part of proprietors and institutional leaders. The attitudes and values are elicited by a perceived threat to the security of the institution from secular values, competitors in the external environment and agential attempts to transform the existing structures so as to enable achieve their goals. The attitudes are also triggered by the leaders' need to keep subordinates under control as a way of ensuring personal security from perceived threats to positions of power and authority. In addition, the challenges are also associated with the resistance against the structures so as to be what they would like to be and also the socioeconomic environment in which the institution is located. I discuss authoritarian and cultural values in Chapter Seven.

Assie-Lumumba (2006) and Teferra & Altbach (2004) observe that one of the challenges in universities in Africa is authoritarian and dictatorial leadership and management practices. The findings in this study as well as my personal work experience in the institution strongly confirm their observation. Institutional leadership behaviour and governance practices in turn tend to affect the adaptive potential and sustainability of a system (Mason, 2009 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

However, I also found that some of the challenges that the institution face are a critical shortage of adequate and various resources, both human and nonhuman. As I discuss below, the challenge affects the capacity of the institution to effectively self-organise so as to deliver better performance (Morrison 2010; Mason 2008 and 2009). I recontextualise the challenges using requisite complexity as a conceptual framework. First, let me briefly describe what the concept of requisite variety and complexity is and how I used the concept in this study. I described this in more detail in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.5.

6.2.3 Requisite variety and complexity

Requisite complexity is defined as “The matching of an individual, team or organization’s level of complexity to the demands of its environment” (Uhl-Bien et al., as cited in Hanna, Lord & Pearce, 2011, p. 216). This refers to matching knowledge, skills, competences and abilities that constituent agents have to potential threats to its survival of a system in its environment. It other words, it is an attempt to take proactive responses to threats (Nooteboom, 2007, pp. 651 - 652). Related to the concept of requisite complexity is the requisite variety (Hanna, Lord & Pearce, 2011, p. 216).

Thus, requisite variety/complexity tends to have implications for an organisation’s adaptability potential to the demands that arise in both its internal and external environment. Furthermore, it also has implications for an organisation’s survival and sustainability in the sense of performing better (Nooteboom, 2007 and Mason, 2009).

Boisot and McKelvey (in Hanna, Lord & Pearce, 2011, p. 216) observe that when an organisation is too complex, chaos and inefficiency emerges. On the other hand, when there is too little complexity in an organisation, the organisation becomes too restricted to understand and respond to its environment.

Heterogeneity of agents - both human and nonhuman (Mason, 2009) - tends to facilitate and enhance dynamic interaction, interdependency, information flow, adaptive and administrative leadership function[11] in a system (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009 and Espinosa & Porter, 2011). Thus, according to Savaya & Spiro (2011, p. 12 – 15), diverse funding, commitment and support of the sponsoring organisation, involvement of the initial funders (proprietors), quality of leadership and community support influence the sustainability of social programmes. In this study I use the concept requisite variety/complexity as a heuristic device to make sense of challenges concerning not only heterogeneous human agents but also nonhuman agents such as resources, academic programmes, equipment, facilities, services, skills and institution. I utilise

[11] Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009) describe administrative function of leadership as the Supervisorial form of leadership that addresses bureaucratic functions of an organisation but not adaptive change whereas the adaptive function of leadership is the informal leadership process that occurs in intentional interactions of interdependent human agents as they work to generate and advance solution that address the adaptive function of a system (pp. 633 and 644).

the concept to explore the implications of the concept of the institution's potential to meet demands in its environment. In the section that follows, I contextualise challenges concerning infrastructure.

6.2.3.1 Requisite infrastructure

A major challenge that the institution faces is lack of resources, materials and facilities that are necessary to support teaching-learning practices and allied activities. As a result, the institution faces difficult situations in its attempt to adapt to demands that arise in its internal and external environments. One such challenge concerns the availability of adequate and appropriate learners' residences.

6.2.3.1.2 Learners' residences

I observed that male learners were accommodated in eight houses that were built for single and married learners when the institution was a seminary. A room of size 3.25 x 3.15 metres accommodated six learners in place of four learners and a room of size 3.15 x 2.5 accommodated three learners in place of two. They slept on bunk beds.

Learners kept their clothes in their suitcases or carrier bags and left them on the floor or under their beds for lack of storage space, cupboards or lockers. The iron sheets on the roofs were rusty. A Learners' Representative said:

> *Another challenge is that the rooms are not enough to accommodate all of us students. For example, in a room, altogether, we're nine. The room is not enough for all of us and our bags* (Interviewed on October 27, 2011 at 10h00).

His room may have been an extreme case of congestion in that there were nine of them in place of four. However, I visited some of the houses to verify the claim. I found that the report was true.

In addition, due to lack of space, the rooms were not furnished with other basic pieces of furniture such as tables that could be used for studies and other activities or bookshelves for storing books. However, although the learners did not like the situation, they endured it for lack of alternative solutions other than to live in a rented house in the nearby villages or to withdraw from the institution. According to the Learners' Representative, (Interviewed on October 27, 2011 at 08h00), the learners who rented houses in the village did so because of other reasons including money but not because of congestion in the residences. He said, *"We don't have a better solution at the moment. There're people who rent out but it's not because of congestion but money. They are money issues"*. In other words, some of the learners who could afford residence fees tended to choose to live on the campus in spite of the situation in the residences. It might be concluded that conditions in the village were worse.

Living in the village tended to pose serious diverse challenges to learners as Student 1 (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 10h00) reported. First, the environment was not conducive to learning. Most of the houses available were not connected to an electrical power supply. As a result, learners who lived in the houses without electricity had to either use paraffin lamps or candles to do their studies and assignments, or they did the studies and assignments on the campus so as to access electricity before they went home. For those who completed their classes late in the afternoon, that meant returning home at night. That posed a safety challenge.

Second, the village environment tended to be noisy as it was not meant to be an environment for learning. In addition, when it rained, the paths became muddy and therefore difficult to move along. Student 2 (Interviewed on October 27, 2011 at 10h00) said, *"But life in the village is not good. It's noisy. The water is bad. And there is no electricity in some houses. Also, when it rains, it is difficult to travel. So, it's bad*".

There were also hygienic challenges due to poor sanitation in terms of availability of water and toilet facilities. Thus, although the conditions in the houses in which male learners lived on the campus were not acceptable, some learners endured the situation if they could afford residence fees rather than live in a rented house in the village.

It can be argued, therefore, that one of the challenges that the institution faced was that it failed to provide initial requisite facilities to match demand and what was generally expected of an institution of higher education. Hence, learners tended to find themselves in a dilemma, that is, whether to endure the situation or turn down the offer for admission. Therefore, the institution tended to attract limited numbers of learners.

I observed that the institution used two staff residences to accommodate the learners who wanted to live on the campus. Some of the learners who failed to find accommodation on the campus returned home rather than rent a house in the nearby villages. This was particularly common among female prospective learners.

The quality of some of the available facilities tended not to match the expectations that some people hold of a university. As the VC (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00) said:

> *A university is seen outside and inside. The inside is what goes on in the classroom, the academic part. But people also must see where students learn, where their library is, where the classrooms are, where the hostels are.*

In other words, a university is not necessarily only about the academic qualification that a student ultimately comes out with. It is also about the facilities and the resources that are utilised in the process of acquiring the academic qualifications. Therefore, the qualification, facilities and the infrastructure need to be consistent with an institution of higher education.

In addition, data show that accommodation is a challenge even for the staff of the institution. There are some members of staff who live in rented houses in a nearby village. Some of them, about five, live in rented houses in a town over thirty kilometres away from the institution, as the VC reported in an interview (November 10, 2011 at 15h00). In addition to an inadequate number of staff residences, availability of classrooms and office space are a challenge too.

6.2.3.1.3 Inadequate teaching-learning, meeting and office space

Another challenge concerns the availability of office space and classrooms. The administration turned one of the faculty houses into a university office. However, because the building did not have enough rooms for all the members of the administration, the accounting staff and the DoF used an adjacent building that was used to store the personal property of the occupants of the house and some of the materials of the institution. However, the buildings had not been renovated so as to look like offices.

In addition, some of the office spaces that faculty and staff use were too small to accommodate two people. As Head 1 (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 12h00) observed:

> *A challenge is space. It's not big enough. We don't even have a room where we can say let us meet together and discuss our own issues together as other people do. That's one of the challenges also, office space for faculty members.*

The institution does not have a conference room. Therefore, when there is a need to hold a faculty meeting, the faculty meets in a classroom which is not being used at the time they need it. Even when the University Council meets on campus, it meets in a classroom that is not in use.

Classrooms are inadequate too. Head 2 reported:

> *There are times when the classes we're using, other people want to use also. So, you are outside with students and you say, "Now where will we learn?" Time is going on, but you have to wait until another class is out then you can use the room* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011, at 12h00).

Head 2 said that sometimes, a teacher had to wait until a class session was over so as to use the classroom. However, when a classroom which a teacher was waiting for was free for use, some of the learners who had to now attend another class session would have to decide whether to miss one class session so as to attend the other. In some cases, a teacher would arrange to offer a course in the evening when most of the classrooms tended to be free. However, some of the learners would complain about having classes in the evening, more especially the ones who lived in rented houses in the village or those who had some assignments to do.

> *If you teach in the evening, then students don't have time to study and they complain. But you say, "What shall I do? This is the only solution". Students don't like it because some live in the village and some come from far. So, having classes in the evening disturbs them* (Head 2, interviewed on October 04, 2011, at 12h00).

In other words, when a teacher offers to teach in the evening, some learners are inconvenienced. Therefore, teaching-learning becomes a challenge due to a lack of requisite infrastructure.

When it is time for examinations, classroom chairs are moved into the hall in which the examinations are conducted. As a result, learners who want to use the classrooms do not find chairs to sit on. They tend to sit on the lawns if the weather is favourable. Student 1 (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 10h00) wondered if management was concerned about the situation. He said, "*One can wonder whether these problems are really being addressed. Like in classrooms usually when it is time for an exam, you can't get a chair in [sic] class*". He tends to think that the administrators should address the situation and he finds the situation frustrating and needing urgent attention. One of the conditions for a decision to operate a school is the availability of classrooms. Also, the admission of learners is not relative to requisite resources. Thus, enrolment outstrips availability of resources and facilities thereby bringing about a challenge. However, another challenge that the institution faces in terms of facilities concerns the lack of an appropriate place of worship.

6.2.3.1.4 Lack of appropriate place of worship

The institution has a chapel that can seat up to one hundred people. However, due to the rise in enrolment, the chapel cannot accommodate all the members of the institution. As a result, the administrators turned a building that was used as a dining hall into a place of worship. Hence, learners collect their meals and sit on the ground outside the hall to eat. They are not allowed to take the food into their residences even when the weather outside is bad. As the Chaplain said:

> *Our challenge is to build a church because now we use the hall. There is a church building but with the rise in enrolment and because members of the community also meet there, we thought it would not be good for university students to mix with villagers. There is a big difference in understanding. So, that would create problems* (Interviewed on 26 August, 2012 at 08h00).

The Chaplain tends to believe that university students are too superior to mix with the villagers. Yet, the learners interact with the villagers on many occasions. For example, some of the learners rent houses in the village and live with the villagers. However, when it comes to worship, the learners and the villagers could not understand each other well. "There is a big difference in understanding. So, that would create problems" the Chaplain said, as quoted above.

The Chaplain tends to believe that the learners will co-evolve in the process of dynamic interaction with the agents in the external environment. Thus, the learners would become more like the villagers rather than the villagers becoming more like the learners. Outside the church, the learners and the members of the contiguous community interact. He appears not to be interested in attending to requests and/or aspirations that are expressed by members of the wider community (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). That is, he tends not to be interested in social transformation, one of the tenets of Christian education (Schultheis, 2005) but *"apartheid"*, that is, separate development. He tends to espouse elitist or classist education.

To deal with a possible problem that would emerge from the mix, he prevents the learners from mixing with the villagers thereby effectively ignoring the inconvenience that the resident learners face when they take their meals. In this case, the challenge is not necessarily lack of a church building. It is the social class to which the people with whom the learners would congregate find themselves in. He fails to recognise his social responsibility to transform followers (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). On the other hand, it might be he himself who feels uncomfortable to worship with the people. He presents the argument for the learners as a cover up for his own prejudice.

6.2.3.1.5 Lack of food preparation facilities

Lack of adequate resources and facilities also adversely affect the food services. The stoves that kitchen staff uses to prepare food use firewood. As the kitchen does not have an adequate wood storage facility, when it rains the firewood becomes wet. It then burns slowly and emits much smoke thereby making the working environment a challenge.

In addition, the pots are not adequate and not big enough to hold food for the number of learners who use the cafeteria. As a result, the kitchen staff prepares food a number of times to meet the demand and as a result, food preparation takes longer. In turn, food service tends to affect class times. As a Cook said:

We have few pots. I think we're over-using them. So, to cook nsima[12] *or rice meal, we have to cook, offload into buckets and cook again to meet the demand* (Interviewed on April 27, 2012; 09h00).

The cooks tend to find the work tough as it is repetitive work. In addition, this challenge creates another challenge regarding food storage facilities. I observed that the kitchen did not have good storage facilities (covered buckets) in which to keep the food that had been prepared in the preceding cycles. Thus, although they self-organise to manage the situation, the challenge tends to persist. The challenge tended to be worse when the meal was rice because most of the learners prefer rice meal to nsima.

6.2.3.1.6 Lack of information and communication technology facilities

The institution was one of the five sites in which a state corporation, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority installed equipment and computers for accessing the Internet in 2009. In addition, Zain (a cell phone network provider) and the Reserve Bank of Malawi donated additional computers for Internet and academic use (Minutes 11/029 of Council Meeting held on 14th June, 2011). However, the Internet connectivity did not function as expected and it often broke down. The contractor who installed the equipment used materials of poor quality, possibly to save on money. The Information and Technology specialist in the institution told me that he kept reporting and following the matter up with the donor but he achieved very little. The institution had been without Internet for over a year when I collected the data. In other words, the institution lacks reliable Internet service. The VC (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00) said:

In other places, the Internet has been the most important tool for delivering materials. But here, we still have to use the library printed materials because we have problems with our Internet here. We have it but it doesn't work successfully as we expect it to… Internet is a very important gadget these days because we can't avoid embracing the new technology which the whole world is now using. We can't remain behind. And by remaining behind, it means we will produce students who will be ignorant. In order to remove this problem or this challenge, we need to spend a lot of money, ask MTL[13] *to come and provide the fibre network from the road there down to the office here… it will be expensive.*

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[12] Main staple food in Malawi, a form of porridge made of maize flour eaten with some relish.

[13] Malawi Telecommunications Limited (MTL) was registered as a limited company in 2000 when government decided to split the parastatal Malawi Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (MPTC) into two entities, MTL and Malawi Posts Corporation (MPC) to allow the two to concentrate on their core businesses separately. In 2005

The challenge affects the institution in significant ways. Some of the teachers in the institution have to rely exclusively on printed material for teaching instead of using the Internet because, as Teacher 1 (Interviewed on November 04, 2011 at 09h00) explains:

> *We have a big problem with the Internet provision since we are out in the rural area, it is becoming a big problem…. these factors contribute a lot to the teaching area. At times, we have to travel to (town) in order to get the Internet.*

The town that the teacher referred to in this interview is over thirty kilometres away from the institution. He needs to access the Internet so as to obtain teaching materials. Teacher 1 thinks that the Internet connectivity is a challenge because the institution is situated in a rural setting away from town. The location may account for the challenge. Internet providers could install equipment to facilitate connectivity regardless of the location of a customer. However, the issue may be about lack of adequate funds to finance Internet equipment and services. I observed that different Internet service providers were contacted. They gave quotations on equipment that needed to be installed, the monthly rental for the equipment and connection charges. However, the quotations were not considered because the institution could not afford the cost. The VC said:

> *In order to remove this problem or this challenge, we need to spend a lot of money, ask MTL to come and provide the fibre network from the road there down to the office here. We shall have to cough up more money than expected because this will be an extra facility and an extra or special kind of fibre* (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00).

At the time I wrote this report, the MT underground fibre network cable had been laid but had not been operational for over a year. In other words, the challenge concerns the level of integrity of contractors and the availability of funds to purchase equipment.

Learners also felt cheated. They were charged fees for Internet use, yet the facility had not been available for almost a year. Student 1 (Interviewed on November 11, 2011 at 10h00) said:

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government through the Privatization Commission finalised the privatisation of MTL. (http://www.mtl.mw/index.php?page=corporate_profile&t=a)

> *Another burning issue is access to the Internet which is so vital to college students. But here it is still a wish, even though some well-wishers donated some computers and other gadgets. It's quite funny that students pay for unavailable or crippled Internet services.*

Lastly, according to the Librarian (Interviewed on June 28, 2012 at 09h00) lack of Internet service hindered the institution from connecting with other libraries in other institutions. The library at the institution has an active subscription to four academic journals: *Harvard Business Review; Educational Leadership; Canadian Journal of Communication and Fortune Magazine*. The library holds 6,500 books. Internet connectivity therefore would widen and diversify access to information to the members of the institution. One of the contributing factors to the challenge is a lack of diverse sources of funding.

6.2.3.2 Sources of institutional funding

Almost all the research participants cited money or alluded to money as one of the major challenges that the institution faces. One of the participants, Proprietor 2 (Interviewed on July 27 2012 at 15h00), said it was the biggest challenge. He cited it as the cause of their failure to build capacity for the institution, develop infrastructure, recruit adequate and appropriately qualified staff and faculty members and diversify academic programmes. In other words, the proprietors have a particular vision of the university:

> *It should be a first class university in providing quality education … learners from our university should excel in various areas of expertise…. And also demonstrate in their character, traits that would positively influence the societies in which they are working.*

The vision was shared with members of the institution. The DoF (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00) said, "Our vision for this institution is to be a world class university. To reach the extent where if people looked here they wouldn't want to be anywhere else but here". The vision statement of the institution appears in some official documents (Student Information Handbook, 2010, p. 2) and the institution's website. However, financial challenges tend to constrain the realization of an institution of the kind the proprietors and administrators want to see. Proprietor 1 said:

> *The biggest challenge I believe, is financial resources which usually are not adequate. And because of lack of adequate financial resources, we have got problems in capacity building in the university where we can reach the standard where we would like to reach.*

Head 1 (Interviewed on October 04, 2011, at 10h00) makes an observation that finance as a challenge has a trickle-down effect:

> *You will notice that if you have problems in finance, you cannot attract the best personnel. People will always say, "How much are you offering?" We are limited to only three programmes because we cannot expand, we have no personnel. So, to me the greatest challenge will always be the finance.*

He attributes the challenge to the institution's humble beginning and to the little initial capital resources. In other words, it is the background that affects the institution, *"We began very small. We began from almost nothing"*. Yet the reason for beginning small was due to a lack of adequate funds.

Head 1 tends to believe that lack of money has a trickledown effect, all other things being equal. It forms a vicious circle. As he points out, because the institution does not have sufficient funds, it is unable to attract qualified teachers; it has also not increased its academic programmes from the initial three that were introduced in 2004: Business studies, with concentration on business management, financial accounting and marketing; Education (secondary) with concentration on English (language and literature) and religious education and Theology and Religious Studies designed for people who want to become clergy (2012 Application form and the 2004 Brochure).

As a result of the lack of diversity in the academic programmes, the institution admits only the learners who are interested in the programmes on offer (Savaya & Spiro, 2011). This, together with other factors that are discussed in this report, tend to constrain the institution's capacity to admit more learners so as to increase income in the form of fees. In other words, the institution fails to adapt to the demands in its environment (Hanna, Lord & Pearce, 2011, p. 216). For example, the total enrolment in the 2011-2012 academic year was 320. In the 2009 academic year, the institution closed with 207. Over the two years, enrolment had increased by 35 percent (End of 2009 Annual Report).

I have observed there could be more learners if the institution diversified the programmes it offered and provided accommodation. For example, some parents, guardians and prospective learners used to visit my office or telephone me to find out about the programmes that the institution offered. Those who were looking for different programmes from what the institution offered wondered why the institution was not offering the programmes, more especially the sciences and ICT.

However, the initial size of the institution may not have been only caused by insufficient funds. There are other underlying causes that I intend to discuss in Chapter Seven of this report. As the VC (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00) tends to believe, there is not only a lack of commitment to supporting the institution but also a lack of understanding of the financial implications for operating a university on the part of the proprietor:

> *When they were mooting to establish a university, not everyone (proprietors) understood what kind of an animal a university is. When it came to some of them, it was a delight but to some, it was a burden and to a few it was confusing* (VC, interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00).

I observed that the proprietors who first contemplated establishing a university consulted widely both within and outside the church organisation. They understood the financial implications of operating a higher education institution. They therefore devised strategies for establishing the institution. For example, they decided to invest in capacity building first while they engaged in sourcing funds for the development of infrastructure and other facilities. They embarked on capacity building in 1997. Next, they wanted to open a junior college that would offer the first two years of a four-year programme and let the institution evolve into offering full four-year programme. However, the successors ignored the plan. Thus, when the institution opened in 2000, as the VC said: *"To some of them, it was a delight but to some, it was a burden"*. It was a financial burden and it closed in 2002. When it re-opened in 2004, "*not everyone* (head office) *understood what kind of an animal a university is"* as the VC claimed.

The initial financial capital that the proprietor made available to re-open the institution was one million Malawi Kwacha. Other available resources that were immediately available, excluding natural resources, included four senior staff houses, one junior staff house, a chapel and an administration building. It housed four offices and a library, a two class-roomed building, a five-roomed multipurpose hall, eight houses for learners who wanted to live with their spouses and eight houses for single learners (Board of Management Meeting Minutes (not numbered), Friday, September 12th, 2003).

There was an administrator and eleven non-academic staff who were working in the institution at that time. An additional administrator was assigned. The two administrators, a principal and a registrar also served as teachers. The rest of the teaching needs in terms of teachers were to be hired as adjunct lecturers (Observation). In other words, there was not much attention paid to planning the growth of the institution in its entirety.

Therefore, as the VC observed, it may be reasonable to conclude that the proprietors did not understand *"what kind of an animal a university is"*. On the other hand, it is equally reasonable to conclude that they knew what a university was in terms of financial implications but they acted within the constraints of the resources at their disposal. As Proprietor 1 (Interviewed on July 27, 2012 at 15h00) said concerning building a residence for male learners:

> *The money (MK40, 000.000.00) was not enough but we said we should start and some people, may be, will come in but we cannot just wait…. So let's start with the small amount which we have so that if there're some people who are interested to come and help us, they can come while we have already started.*

Proprietor 1 tends to believe that if the institution used its own resources regardless of the inadequacy of the resources, some sympathisers may come along to complement the effort. In due course, the project would be completed. I have observed that the belief that Proprietor 1 has tends to be common and encouraged in Malawi. Both in the church and government, community members are encouraged to initiate and embark on development projects first. They can then seek funding from well-wishers instead of waiting until the required amount of funding has first been realized. Therefore, Proprietor 1 tends to act out of habit and presumptuousness. In some cases, the practice may be successful. Given the challenges that have existed over the past eight years concerning learners' residences, classrooms, library and other facilities, it can be argued that the practice has not been successful.

I was not able to investigate the understanding that the proprietors who re-opened the institution 2004 had. Only one of the three proprietors (the chairperson, the general secretary and treasurer) was around. He refused to be interviewed on the matter. Nevertheless, as I discuss below, data show that the institution mostly depends on the income generated by fees for its financial operations.

6.2.3.2.1 Dependence on fees

According to data, the institution depends mostly on fees as a major source of income both for operations and capital development. In the 2011 Operation Budget, fees comprised 81 percent of the total income (2011 Budget, p. 4). The proprietors contribute approximately 0.5 per cent of the annual income in the form of offerings that are collected from church members. In monetary terms, the appropriation from the proprietor amounts to approximately three million Malawi Kwacha (about USD8, 571, 000.00) per annum (2011 Operation Budget). As one of the proprietors, Proprietor 2, (Interviewed on July 27 2012 at 15h00) observed, the appropriation is not much. They intend to increase it to a reasonable amount.

> *We also provide appropriation as the proprietors of the university. Currently, every month we provide; it is not much but it is something, half per cent of total income … and the intention is to increase that amount to a reasonable amount.*

In other words, the appropriation falls well below the amount that could be used to bring about significant outcomes. This in turn, leaves the institution to mostly depend on the income generated by fees for its operation and capital development. To raise enough income, the fees have to be increased. As a result of the increase some of the learners and parents/guardians find it difficult to afford enrolment. In some cases, they fail to complete paying the fees for a semester. The DoF said:

> *We have maybe about 15 to 20 per cent that have failed to complete paying the fees for that particular semester…. we can see it when this week they bring ten thousand Kwacha and the next week they bring twenty thousand Kwacha. So the parents are struggling* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00).

Some learners completely drop out of school because they cannot afford the fees. On the other hand, some learners stop schooling, go and find a job to raise fees, then return to resume classes. This means that such learners not only take much longer to complete their studies but they also pay higher fees as fees tend to be increased almost every year. Student 2 (Interviewed on October 27, 2011 at 10h00) said:

> *Last year I had a problem with fees as I did not have enough money. Also the other semester I did not have any pocket money, so I went to South Africa to look for a job. I worked there for six months and I generated enough money for my fees for the remaining semesters.*

In other words, some of the learners are already disadvantaged in that they come from poor families. However, their situation worsens in that they cannot access higher education and therefore, by implication, expect to live better lives. They remain disadvantaged. It may be argued, therefore, that while the manifest function of the institution is to contribute to the socio-economic development of society, its latent function is to reproduce the cycle of poverty. Head 1 observed that the trend is rising:

> *We have seen a number of students dropping out and this is an upward trend. I've seen some brilliant students who are of lower class society… those that were really doing well drop out because they don't have fees* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 10h00).

The institution also lacks the capacity to carry out research so as to contribute to the fund of knowledge or consultancy services to help solve social problems. As such, the institution fails to live out one of the core values of a higher education institution, which is to construct and disseminate new knowledge as I indicated in Chapter Two, Section 2.3:

> *We don't have research and publications even though we have people that can do the research. It is because, you see, they're too busy and they're teaching for long hours and they don't have time for research. But that's not a good excuse because a good university must research and publish so that they feed the knowledge of the students.*

The VC quoted above thinks that the reason for the faculty not carrying out research is that they could be too busy due to heavy teaching loads. However, as Head 2 observed, the administration tried to intervene:

> *Doing some simple research requires money. I remember some people just saying - let's do research - but when we met again and I said we have now formed a research committee and I want somebody from my department to carry out research, I discovered that this was not possible, as someone in my department said to me - how do I do research when I*

> *have nothing, not even K1 to begin with* (Head 2, interviewed on October 04, 2011, at 12h00).

Therefore, it appears that one of the major challenges is lack of money to fund research rather than unwillingness on the part of the staff to carry out research. When I was working at the institution, a colleague and I wanted to carry out research in one of the schools, known for its poor performance in public examinations. The project was to be funded by the institution. However, we could not continue with the project because the institution could not supply stationery. We could not access a printer because the one that was available had broken down. It was the only printer that staff members and the administration used. It remained unrepaired for over three months.

As Head 1 and the VC said above, lack of funds affects other operations and availability of facilities that are necessary to carry out research and consultancy. It also tends to constrain the capacity of an institution to recruit adequate teachers thereby alleviating teaching loads. In the following section, I discuss its effect on the recruitment of teachers and non-academic staff.

6.2.3.3 Inadequate of appropriately qualified teachers

The other challenge the institution faces in adapting to the demands in the environment concerns the availability of full-time appropriately qualified and skilled teachers to match the increase in student enrolment. There are too few appropriately qualified (the minimum qualification being a master's degree) full-time teachers for the courses that the institution offers. As Head 1 (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 9h00) said:

> *I got into this institution straight away as a head of department … no experience in teaching. We need one or two more people to be full-time teachers…. we do not have appropriately qualified staff to teach certain courses that are part and parcel of what we offer.*

I observed that in the Education Department there have been two full-time teachers since January 2011. The department offers all the courses necessary for the learners to meet general education requirements except the courses in religion and business studies. In addition, the department offers three core teaching areas and teacher preparation courses. As a result, not only does the institution rely on adjunct teachers but it also tends to overload the available full-time teachers with courses. Teacher 1 (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 9h00) said:

The challenges we face in this institution, it's the work load. There are so many subjects that we have to go through and sometimes you have to take other subjects where you can't find an adjunct lecturer….. I'm supposed to teach twelve hours in a week but I teach eighteen hours….no rest or sleeping late so that you can catch up with the work load. The result is you have too much work.

The overload means that the teachers have little time to rest or sleep. Not only do the teachers teach the courses they are assigned, but they also teach the courses that adjunct teachers should have taught were they available. In some cases, as the teacher says, they are not available. Of the adjunct teachers who are available, some of them do not teach effectively. It may be said that the selection process of the teachers is flawed. The institution does not check to see if the person is appropriately qualified and can teach effectively. Or, it may be that some of the teachers do not care how they teach when they are offered the job. Or it may be both. From the data, it is likely that it is both. Learners' Representative (ibid.) observed that:

The way a number of the lecturers present the work in class causes the students to not understand. I also heard this from some other students who were passing. Myself, I don't understand sometimes, the way they present. This is especially true with some adjunct lecturers … They just read from books, no explanation.

In addition, learners reported that some of the adjunct teachers tend not to keep appointments and tend to rush through a course. Student 2 (Interviewed on October 27, 2011 at 10h00) said:

They (adjunct teachers) don't come on time and on the days they are supposed to come…For example, this is in October, they're not here. They will come at the end of November. They just teach the course for two weeks, and then you are told of the exam. They're not helping us because they teach for such a short time, and then give assignments, yet we are now going into exam time. And we pay fees for the whole course although we're not taught well. They just impose readings on us as if we're not supposed to be taught. Sometimes, we just hear rumours that this is not supposed to be done this way.

The student observed that a course which should have been for a semester is taught in two weeks although the learners paid the full amount for the course. In other words, the learners feel cheated. Also the teachers give assignments close to examination time. Working on the assignments therefore interferes with preparation for the examination.

In addition, some of the teachers give reading assignments in place of direct teaching. They do not discuss with the learners the content of the reading materials that they give. The learners see the practice as being unfair because they are essentially teaching themselves although they have a right to be taught since they pay the prescribed fees so that a teacher should teach them. Full-time teachers are also not professional in their conduct. The Learners' Representative said, *"This is especially with some adjunct lecturers but also some full-time lecturers. They just read from books, no explanation"* (Interviewed on October 27, 2011 at 08h00).

Proprietor 2 raised similar challenges in respect to the adjunct teachers who teach at the institution. He said that using a number of adjunct lecturers was not the best way because adjunct lecturers were committed to their full-time work. Hence, it is difficult for them to find time to complete the teaching hours which they were allocated. In other words, even the proprietors are aware that the institution lacks the requisite resources to meet the internal demands of the system, in this case the system concerned with the core business of the institution, the instruction system.

Also, some of the adjunct teachers do not turn in examination results on time. As a result, by the time the following semester opens, some of the learners may not be aware of their academic performance in the previous semester. Student 1 (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 10h00) said, *"The time frame to release grades especially from the outsourced lectures is also a problem. It's my wish that someone can start a new semester knowing the results of the previous semester"*. This becomes a challenge in view of the fact that the curricula are structured in modules. It becomes difficult therefore, for learners to register for the next composite module unless they know how they performed in the previous one. As Assistant 1, (Interviewed on May 24, 2012 at 12h00) grades are released late because some of the adjunct teachers submit them late. I observed that some of the adjunct teachers take more than two semesters to release the results.

Teacher 1 (Interviewed on November 04, 2011 at 9h00) observed that the issue was not that appropriately qualified people were not available. Rather, it was that there was a scramble for qualified teachers in the external environment. Therefore, salaries had become competitive as a result. The institution was hence unable to match the demand: it does not have the requisite complexity in the form of funds. He said:

> *We have qualified people who can teach. But looking at our department, our business department for instance, it is a department where most of the people who are qualified are wanted in several organisations where they are well paid and if they look at the salaries that we are offering here, they are low. That is one of the contributing factors for failing to find the proper people who can come in and teach.*

The observation of Teacher 1 that appropriately qualified people who can teach are available is correct. When the institution advertised teaching posts in 2005, many people applied. However, almost all of the applicants declined the offer for a job because the institution offered much less than they were prepared to take.

The same has been true concerning responses to the advertised post of the Vice Chancellor. Prospective applicants first wanted to know how much the institution would offer in terms of remuneration, retirement benefits and allowance. When they were advised of the range of the total package, only three people applied. Of the three, one was a person who had retired. He was ready to take the offer. He may have been ready to take the offer possibly because he already had the retirement benefits to live on. What the institution was going to offer him would be an additional income. On the other hand, he may have been interested in coming back into active service and may also have wanted to contribute to the development of the institution. In other words, one of the challenges that the institution faces is the capacity to match the demand that exists in the external environment. In this case, it is demand for remuneration packages that match or exceed what other institutions offer for a similar position. The institution failed to make such an offer. As a result, the position was vacant by the time I prepared this report. As I show below, the challenge exists even in non-academic departments.

6.4.3.4 Lack of appropriately qualified non-teaching staff

It is not only teachers that the institution lacks. It also has inadequate appropriately qualified skilled people to provide support services like motor vehicle mechanics, computer engineering, building, secretarial and other services. For example, I observed that all the teachers and the heads of academic departments do their own typing work because the institution cannot provide a secretary. While doing typing by themselves tends to save the institution from increasing wages, it is not an option. It has more to do with a lack of requisite financial resources than financial prudence. The teachers had been requesting the administration to provide them with at least one typist but the administration could not due to financial constraints.

Assistant 1 (Interviewed on April 12, 2012 at 9h00) said that although he had access to a computer and the institution provided him with a laptop, he had difficulties typing and storing data because his competence in computer usage was very limited. He had problems in creating, managing and retrieving data from databases. As a result, learners had to wait for long, even for days at times, to get academic information. In addition, the Contractor cited lack of qualified artisans as a huge challenge that he faced (Document signed, n.d.)

6.2.4 Summary

In summary, some of the critical challenges that the institution faces are lack of adequate requisite variety of resources and facilities in terms of finance, infrastructures, ICT, skills, competences, human and nonhuman agents. The scarcity of the resources and facilities tends to constrain the agents' ability and the institution's capacity to effectively and adequately adapt to demands that arise in the environment. There is a strong relationship between the challenges and the level of commitment, involvement and support by the proprietor in the form of governance and funding. In addition, lack of adequate requisite variety is also associated with management practices, lack of adequate support from the wider community and the level of socioeconomic development of Malawi. In the chapter that follows, I explore the possible underlying causal factors and the mechanisms that tend to condition the challenges.

Danermark et al., (2002, p. 54) hold the view that causal analysis involves identifying the social structures within which the causal powers, generative mechanisms and/or liabilities exist. In addition, it is required that a researcher demonstrates how causal mechanisms, powers or liabilities tend to bring about the events when a causal mechanism is triggered. I first briefly review the concept of causes and causality in critical realism.

Chapter Seven

Explanation of emergence, development and challenges in private higher education in Malawi

> *Scientific explanations are not to do with empirical covariance or statistical correlation: an explanation is about causes, and a cause is that which can make something happen in the world* (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 70).

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore possible responses to three of the four research questions that I posed in Chapter One, namely:

- What factors enabled the emergence of private higher education in Malawi?
- Second, what challenges does private higher education in Malawi face?
- Third, what generative mechanisms tend to give rise to and condition the challenges?

I answer the fourth question (*How could the development of private higher education in Malawi be made more sustainable?*) in Chapter Eight.

To explore the answers to the three questions I resorted to retroductive inference, using abstraction as the method. I described retroduction in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.4.4. Through counterfactual reasoning I came up with the most likely underlying causes of the emergence, growth and development of private higher education in Malawi and the generative mechanisms that cause and condition the challenges that private higher education faces. I base the explanation on the context of higher education that I presented in Chapter Two and theoretical reinterpretation of the causal links in the challenges that I discussed in Chapter Six. I also drew on other theories in the social sciences.

Briefly, as a matter of recall, in critical realist thought something is real if it has an effect or can generate an event (Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012, p. 303). Therefore, a critical realist conceptualisation of causation is that causes are real structural or agential properties or resources or powers that tend to produce, generate, determine or constrain, prevent, or condition something or some event. Causes include material resources, social structures (norms, rules, values, discourses, etc.) or reasons, motives, and beliefs that agents have for carrying out or not carrying out their actions. They also include properties of nonhuman agents (Sayer, 2000; Danermark et al., 2002 and Kurki, 2007).

Causes exist deep in the structure of phenomena in the domain of the real. They may not be observable in the sense of being visible to the eye or measurable. Causal analysis therefore, has nothing to do with observing regular or constant conjunction of events; it operates through retroductive and counterfactual reasoning about events in seeking to find out what has to be in place for an event to be what it is or for an event to happen (Houston, 2010, pp. 82 – 83). We become aware of the existence of underlying causes because of the effects that they produce or do not produce if they are or are not triggered by certain processes or mechanisms (Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006 and Houston, 2010).

It is also significant to be aware, according to critical realist and complexity theorist thinking, that at different times or at the same time, a single cause may generate multiple events just as multiple causes may generate a single event; and also that different causal mechanisms may cancel or prevent or complement or weaken the effects of other mechanisms. That is, causal mechanisms do not necessarily always produce outcomes. As such, causal mechanisms exist as tendencies as their effects may (or may not) be experienced due to the effects of other causal mechanisms (Danermark et al., 2002; Hesketh & Fleetwood, 2006; Kurki, 2007 and Prowse, 2010) (refer to Chapter Four, Section 1.2).

Therefore, a scientific explanation according to critical realism, should describe the underlying causes in the structures of events and demonstrate how the causes that have been identified generate the events (Danermark et al., 2002). I devote this chapter to discussing possible underlying causal factors of the emergence, development and growth of private higher education in Malawi and the challenges that the case site faces. However, the discussion is necessarily brief owing to the limitations of this project, time, and the resources I had to utilise to carry out the study.

7.2 Contextual, structural and systemic causal factors of the emergence and development of private higher education in Malawi

There were a number of underlying factors that gave rise to the emergence, growth and development of private higher education in Malawi. The factors were structural, systemic and agential in nature. They are outlined and discussed below.

7.2.1 Global socioeconomic and sustainable development challenges

Higher education is considered to be "one of the most important determiners of economic success and as a crucial resource in the scramble for global profits" (Naidoo, 2003, pp. 250 – 251). For governments to survive and compete in the new global economy, the knowledge economy characterised by rapid transfer of information, economic integration and technological innovation, it needs highly educated and sophisticated citizenry. Hence the worldwide demand for access to higher education (UNESCO, 1990; Weenen, 2000; Carpenter & Meehan, 2002; Clegg, Hudson & Steel, 2003; Assie-Lumumba, 2006; Nayyar, 2006; Adrian, 2007). UNESCO, the World Bank and other international agencies urge governments worldwide to adapt to the demand for higher education knowledge by addressing issues concerning funding, access, equity, relevance of curricula and instruction, quality, research, facilities and governance policies in the provision of higher education (Clegg, Hudson & Steel, 2003; UNESCO, 2004; Schultheis, 2005; Nayyar, 2006; Adrian, 2007 and Bjarnason, 2009).

However, the Malawi government, like many governments worldwide (UNESCO/OECD, 2005; Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006 and Assie-Lumumba, 2006), has been unable to expand the provision of as well as widen access to higher education in order to meet the demand. As a result, government liberalised the provision of higher education so as to enable it to adapt to the demand. It invited the private sector to participate in providing higher education so as to have the requisite variety of personnel who can enable it to survive the global competition for technological development. An underlying generative mechanism for private higher education is therefore, the need to survive global socioeconomic and technological development challenges.

To deal with the challenges, there is a need to acquire knowledge, skills and ways of reasoning that higher education provides. However, I did not explore the underlying causes of the Malawi government's failure to expand and widen access to higher education as it was not one of the goals of this study.

7.2.2 Neo-liberal ideology and trade in educational services

The second factor contributing to the rise of private higher education is the agential need to survive economic challenges. Given the realization that higher education "contributes to creation of wealth… It has the potential to enhance the wealth and life choices of graduates" (Morley, Leach & Lugg, 2008, p. 56). Higher education has evolved into a lucrative service that can be sold. The development is attributed to a worldwide shift from the "Keynesian welfare state" (Naidoo, 2003, p. 25) to neo-liberal socioeconomic ideology. The ideology discourages the state from being sole regulators and funders of higher education, exposes higher education to market forces and enables global cross-border provision of higher education and trade in educational services (Naidoo, 2003, p. 250 and UNESCO, 2004, p. 6) (refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.5.4).

Hence, for-profit private providers worldwide have engaged in higher education as an industry (Naidoo, 2003, pp. 249 - 250 and Bjarnason, 2009, pp. 1 - 2). This is also the case in Malawi. As the Director observed, "*People are opening up these universities. All they are interested in is money. As long as they recruit so many students, they get a lot of money*" (Interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h20). In essence, the need for business opportunities to enable one to survive socioeconomically has increasingly turned people to invest in the provision of higher education (UNESCO, 2004, p. 8).

7.2.3 Global regulators' policy frameworks

It has been observed that in attempting to meet the targets agreed upon in the Millennium Development Goals in education, governments have invested heavily in early childhood and secondary education (Bjarnason, 2009, p. 1). However, attempts to expand access to basic and secondary education have not been met with attempts to expand access to higher education.

In Malawi there was one public university until 1998. Government introduced free primary education in 1994. By 2007 some of the free primary education students had completed secondary school education (refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.10.1.1). The development gave rise to "a bulge of qualified students and frequently inadequate provision available to meet demand" (Bjarnason, 2009, p. 1). Although government opened a new university in 1998, the solution did not adequately deal with the challenge. It had to allow for the alternative provision of higher education so as to absorb the excess qualified school-leavers who demanded admission into public universities. That is, private higher education was an emergent phenomenon out of complex interactions of constituent agents in the economic, socio-political systems as the agents attempted to adapt the social and economic systems to the demands that emerged within the macro system (government) (Rihani & Geyer, 2001 and Mason, 2008 and 2009) (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3).

7.2.4 Politics and political expediency

It is also pertinent to consider the role of politics in the emergence of private higher education. According to the Director, the emergence of private higher education is closely associated with the change from one-party to multiparty politics in 1994. This development enabled people to openly criticize government's failure to deal with qualified school-leavers who demanded access to higher education.

Thus, to survive political pressure, government reviewed the University Education Act in order *"to accommodate private sector initiatives"* (Malawi. PRSP, 2002, p. 35) thereby liberalising the provision of higher education. Although it invited the private sector to participate in providing higher education, government had not put in place structures and mechanisms for regulating and monitoring the provision of private higher education. As I pointed out, by the time government invited the private sector to participate, the private providers had already been operating private higher education institutions, the first one having emerged in 1994 (see Chapter Six, Section

6.3.1.1). That is, liberalisation of higher education was brought about out of political expediency.

7.2.5 The mission of the Christian church

The Christian conceptualisation of salvation is broad. It is understood to mean the need to survive socioeconomic and environmental challenges as well as the need to be saved from eternal damnation in the world to come after death. In this case, survival or salvation has a broader and more holistic meaning. It encompasses the freedom that comes from dealing with the consequences of sin including sociocultural, economic and environmental challenges and the impact of government policies on the poor and vulnerable groups in society. It also means dealing with sin itself by interrogating social values and practices (Schultheis, 2005, p. 103).

Therefore, Christian church proprietors carry out the commission that Jesus gave in the book of Matthew 28.19:

> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

The mission is carried out in such a way that o

> a relationship between faith and life is established in each person and in the socio-cultural context in which individuals live, act and communicate with one another. The Holistic Gospel urges attention to those excluded from society on account of poverty, illness, hunger and homelessness (Schultheis, 2005, p. 104).

That is to say, Christian proprietors utilise higher education as a mechanism for the construction and dissemination of knowledge about God and for socioeconomic transformation (Schultheis, 2005; Adrian, 2007 and Dyck & Wiebe, 2012). This tends to be achieved by implementing religious, science and humanities curricula and academic programmes (Adrian, 2007). In transforming communities, Christian churches also tend to strengthen the capacity of their faith communities to support the church and its ideologies. That is, the church invests in education in order to gain material and moral support from communities.

I indicated that the first private institution of higher education emerged in 1994 (see Chapter 2, Section 2.11). In 2009, there were five private government-accredited universities. By the time I compiled this report, the number had increased to ten. In the next section, I examine the causal factors that have enabled the rapid development and expansion of private higher education in Malawi.

7.3 Development and expansion of private higher education

The development and expansion of private institutions of higher education in Malawi tend to be influenced by structural, systemic and agential factors. First, as I have demonstrated, the structure or mechanism (CEC) to control and monitor the provision of private higher education tended to be either weak or ineffectively implemented (refer to Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1.1.2). As a result, private providers exploited the ambiguous situation and established private institutions of higher education with or without the approval of government. The Director said:

> Some have *and others* have *not even come for*ward to say that they *have opened a university. So, they are just operating on their own. So, we have found that it has been quite a challenge because of this liberalization. Without any tool to use, especially the legal instrument, you find that there has been a mushrooming of so many private universities* (Interview on September 21, 2011, at 14h00).

Second, faith-based organisations view higher education as a mechanism for propagation and preservation of their religious doctrines and worldview (see Section 7.1 above). Therefore, some of the religious organisations operate their own institutions. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of private institutions of higher education in Malawi.

Third, there was a large pool of qualified youths and adults who needed access to higher education but failed to get admitted into public universities (refer to Chapter 2.10). Some of the factors that tended to condition the availability of qualified persons were first, that public universities mostly tended to cater for school-leavers except for post-graduate programmes. As a result, they admitted a limited number of adult applicants. Also, due to limited available space and other factors, admission into public universities was based on a quota system. The practice prevented some of the qualified applicants from accessing public higher education because of their area of origin.

In addition, owing to frequent strikes that often resulted in closures of public universities, the length of time it would take students to graduate tended to be highly unpredictable. As a result, some guardians and students preferred private to public higher education. Besides, public universities had rigid modes and times of instruction. It became difficult for working people to access higher education (refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.7.1). Thus, private higher education rapidly expanded and grew because there was a market for the service.

7.4 Summary

It can be said that complex underlying causal factors enabled the emergence of private institutions of higher education in Malawi. The factors included global structural, systemic and ideological changes and local politics. On the other hand, the rapid growth and development of private higher education was mostly due to its being viewed as a trade commodity, the availability of 'customers' [people who need higher education], a weak mechanism for monitoring and controlling the establishment of private institutions of higher education, the need to evangelise and preserve religious doctrines on the part of Christian church providers, the quota system practice whereby access to public higher is rationed, the sudden and frequent closures of public universities due to strikes and public universities' rigid modes of delivery and times of instruction.

In the next section, I outline and discuss possible underlying causes of the challenges that the research site faces and the factors that tend to condition the challenges. The possible causes include personality, cultural values, governance and leadership/management practices and policies, religious beliefs and economic factors. Although I outlined the factors as such, in effect, these causal factors are interconnected and work in relation with one or more other factors in various ways in generating and/or sustaining the challenges (see Section 7.1 above).

7.5 The need for job security

An underlying generative mechanism that appears to give rise to some of the challenges that the institution faces concerning inadequate requisite resources tends to be a low sense of security in some of the proprietors of the institution. Some of the proprietors tend to feel vulnerable to losing positional authority. As a defense mechanism, the proprietors utilise governance structures to protect their positions in the organisation.

According to the OECD (in Goedegebuure & Hayden, 2007, p. 2) governance plays a number of critical roles in the proper functioning and performance of an institution. It provides:

- necessary structures and systems for proper management and leadership of an organisation; structure through which objectives of an institution are set, the means for attaining the objectives and for monitoring performance;
- strategic guidance of an institution;
- for financial administration and
- for controlling, and supervising the institution.

The Governors are consequently accountable to the constituency that elected them although they delegate their authority to others in an institution such as the administrators and faculty committees comprising faculty, staff, students and alumni (OECD, as cited in Goedegebuure & Hayden, 2007, p. 2 and Harman & Treadgold, 2007, pp. 14 - 15 and 23).

However, in this institution, proprietors have not put in place effective governance structures and systems in the form of legal policy framework, rules and regulations. In this way they avoid being held accountable and responsible by the constituency for the challenges that the institution faces.

7.6 Ownership and accountability

Another causal factor is a weak sense of ownership of and accountability to the institution. Technically, the institution is owned by the sponsoring church organisation. The proprietors and governors act as trustees of the members of the organisation as a constituency of the church (Meek & Hayden, as cited in Harman & Treadgold, 2007, p. 14 and 23). However, the members fail to exercise full ownership of the institution because they tend not to be aware of and/or are hindered in the exercising of their rights and responsibilities. As a result, the members fail to hold proprietors accountable for the governance, management and performance of the institution. There are a number of possible underlying factors that tend to condition lack of accountability. These include cultural values and weak internal and external control systems. I summarise the most likely cultural values that tend to be at play in this context.

7.6.1 Culture and cultural values

According to Hofstede (1997, p. 5) culture consists of values[14]. The values underlie and influence such behaviour as expressing or not expressing feelings and maintaining a physical as well as a psychological distance from others. Culture is learned from one's social environment and is the means by which people "communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life". It influences people's economic practices, government policies, organisation and management of social institutions and level of innovation (Rinne, Steel & Fairweather, 2012, pp. 93 - 96). In short, culture is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 5).

Hofstede (1997, p. 11) identified five criteria that differentiate between cultural values in different nations (McSweeney, 2002 and Rinne, Steel & Fairweather, 2012, p. 96). For the purposes of this study, I used three of the criteria to explain the causes: power distance, collectivism versus individualism and uncertainty avoidance. I considered the criteria to be relevant for the available data and the goals of this study. I summarise what these are. Due to the limitations of this study, I did not critique Hofstede's theory. Interested readers may want to examine McSweeney's (2002) critique, *Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith – a failure of analysis* and other sources.

7.6.1.1 Power distance values

Hofstede defines power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisation within a country expect and accept that power is distributed

[14] Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others (Hofstede, 1997, p. 8).

unequally" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 28). In large power distance organisations, power tends to be centralised in a few hands; subordinates expect to be told what to do; contacts between superiors and subordinates is mostly initiated by superiors; older superiors are more respected for their age than younger ones and open and candid discussion on emergent issues is strained (Hofstede, 1997, p. 28 and Carl, Gupta, & Javidan, as cited in Van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1246).

On the other hand, in small power distance organisations, superiors and subordinates consider each other as existentially equal; subordinates expect to be consulted but concede that bosses finally decide because they are answerable to their superiors; workers are highly qualified, superiors are accessible to subordinates and an ideal boss is "a resourceful democrat" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 28).

7.6.1.2 Collectivist versus individualist values

Collectivist values refer to the extent to which the interests of the group prevail over the interests of the individual. They influence people to establish stronger and wider interpersonal and family relationships and value communal interest. The relationship between an employer and an employee is similar to family relationships: mutual obligations demand loyalty in exchange for protection and poor performance in an organisation is not considered to be a cause for dismissal from work. In individualist values, "the interest of the individual prevails over the interest of the group" and are characterised by loose ties of social relationships among members (Hofstede 1997, p. 50).

7.6.1.3 Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance, according to Hofstede (1997, p. 113), is "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations". In large uncertainty avoidance societies, people are interested in having many and detailed rules to guide life so as to leave nothing to chance. By contrast, in small uncertainty avoidance cultures, people are interested in living in a less structured social environment and work hard when there is need to do so (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 121- 122).

7.6.2 Cultural values, governance and accountability

In public institutions governors are held accountable by the people who elected them (Harman & Treadgold, 2007, p. 23). In the research site members of the sponsoring church organisation hold a general meeting, called Session, every five years. Among other functions, the delegates to a Session evaluate and elect church leaders, receive and debate on reports about the performance of various institutions in the church, appoint the Executive Committee of the church and appoint boards of institutions including the University Council. These structures serve for a five-year term until the next Session (Working Policy, Article V of 2010, p. 127).

However, delegates in the Session avoid open and candid questioning of the practices of leaders and performance of institutions in the organisation. Open discussion would reveal the strength of the leaders but also their weaknesses. That is, leaders become vulnerable. Therefore, they avoid giving details of their performance for fear of attracting questions. On the other hand, the delegates refrain from closely following up on issues that are or are not raised and holding leaders accountable. That is, in large power distance and collectivist cultures and organisations, followers fear questioning leadership behaviour and management practices (Hofstede, 1997 and Khatri, 2009, p. 3).

Therefore it can be argued that lack of accountability for the way the institution is governed and managed can be due to cultural values. For instance, at the last Session, held in 2010, delegates to the Session did not ask why new boards of governors or the University Council were not appointed or demand that the boards be appointed.

7.6.3 Internal structures within governance

I pointed out above that the last Session did not appoint boards of governors or the University Council (Council). However, when a Session fails to do so, the responsibility falls on the Executive Committee (Working Policy, Article VII, Section 2 and BA 55 of 2010, pp. 29 and 190 - 91). The current Council was appointed in 2008 (Minutes of the Extraordinary Council, July 31, 2008). At the time of this research when almost two years had passed, the Executive Committee had still not appointed a new Council. As the VC (Interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00) observed:

When we found this Council, the one we have today in fact, it would have changed by the time we had gone into the new quinquenium. It didn't change because those parameters were not there. But we suggested to the former president in May last year that we need to ask the Executive Committee to appoint or elect new lay representatives. To date this has not been done.

I think that the lack of commitment to comply with the requirements of the working policy is conditioned by a number of factors. The first is weak or non-existent policy provisions that demand and monitor compliance. In addition, cultural values tend to constrain members of the Executive Committee from requesting the proprietors to appoint new governing boards and the Council. The members fear reprisals for being perceived as either attempting to disrespect or embarrass authorities or both (Hofstede, 1997 and Khatri, 2009). By fearing to be perceived as doing so, the Executive Committee tends to avoid holding the proprietors accountable.

I need to point out that the Executive Committee comprises the directors of the church's departments at the headquarters, heads of the institutions and regional head headquarters of the church (twenty-two in total) and three lay persons. Therefore, it lacks the heterogeneity of agents that is necessary for taking diverse perspectives in decision-making (Morrison, 2010 and Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009. It is also important to point out that both the Executive Committee and the Council are chaired by the head of the church in the country. As Proprietor 2 pointed out, the Council is dormant. He said:

The relationship between the Council and the university community is dormant… So, the impact of the Council is only seen when decisions are taken … there's not an occasion where I have seen interaction (Interviewed July 27, 2012, at 15h00).

That is, the Council is weak and detached from the institution. It is not conversant with and does not deal with the underlying causes of the challenges that the institution faces. One of the underlying factors is lack of clarity about its roles and relationship with the proprietor (Harman &Treadgold, 2007, p. 14). Teacher 3 observed that for almost a year the institution had been headed by an Acting Vice Chancellor. Two of the three academic departments of the institution were headed by acting heads of department (refer Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1.1.4). By the time I wrote this thesis in December 2012, the Council had not dealt with the challenge.

In addition, at international level of the sponsoring church organisation hierarchy, there is an international association that is responsible for evaluating and accrediting educational institutions of the church (Working Policy FE 20 35 of 2010, p. 236). An institution has to invite the association to evaluate it. I observed that the institution had not invited it. In this way, lack of accountability tends to be conditioned and sustained.

7.6.4 External governance monitoring structures

The Director pointed out that the CEC lacks the legal framework for monitoring, supervising and regulating the provision of private higher education (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.1.2). In other words, the external structure for monitoring the provision of private higher education is weak. Consequently, private (even public, for that matter!) providers are not held accountable for dealing with the challenges that their institutions face. In turn, this tends to condition weak governance practices. I pointed out in the section that I have referred to above that a new structure had been put in place of the CEC, the National Council for Higher Education (Bulletin, 2011, p. 3). By the time I collected data for this study the council had still not been put in place.

7.6.5 Change of values and attitude

There is a change of attitude in the leaders of the sponsoring church organisation toward education. Whereas education tended to be valued as one of the necessary generative mechanisms for propagation of church doctrines, it is currently considered to be dispensable. It can be disposed of without causing great perturbation in the normal functions and performance of the church. Assessment of the need for providing education is based on financial costs rather than on evangelistic and socioeconomic transformation outcomes (2012 Division Financial Survey Committee Report to the Executive Committee).

As a result, financial support of the institution tends to be viewed as an expense rather than as an investment in evangelism and socioeconomic transformation. Hence, the proprietor tends to be less committed to dealing with the challenges that demand financial interventions apart from verbal expression of interest (refer to Chapter Six, Sections 6.3.2.1.1.3 and 6.3.3.2).

Investigating the underlying causes of the change in attitude towards education was not one of the goals of this study.

7.7 Summary

I can say therefore, that a possible underlying causal factor that tends to give rise to some of the challenges that the institution faces is a limited sense of security among the proprietors. Thus, to protect themselves from becoming more vulnerable, the proprietors tend to weaken governance structures that are more likely to enable followers to hold them accountable. Lack of accountability is possibly conditioned by other various structural and systemic factors including cultural values and systems such as the Council and both private and public accrediting systems.

In addition to governance practices, some causal factors lie within leadership and management structures as well as within the macro socioeconomic context within which private higher education is located. I discuss the factors below.

7.8 Financial resources

The institution lacks adequate funds for operations and capital development. It also lacks diverse sources of financial resources. Lack of adequate financial resources tends to constrain the capacity of the institution from providing diverse teaching-learning support services, facilities and infrastructure and hiring appropriately qualified academic, administrative and nonacademic personnel (refer to Chapter Six , Section 6.3.3.2.1). The challenge tends to be conditioned by a number of mechanisms which I discuss below.

7.8.1 Misconception about use of fees

First, the proprietors tend to believe that fees could suffice to meet the operations and capital development costs in the institution. Therefore, the proprietors raised funds to recruit students and two teachers and eight support staff so as to generate funds. The belief was that the institution would thereafter be collecting fees and that the fees would be used to finance operations and capital development costs. As result, the proprietors tend to be less committed to dealing with the challenges that require investment in financial resources such as infrastructure, teaching and learning facilities, student support services, personnel, accommodation and other challenges that the institution faces (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2.1).

For instance, the half per cent funding that Proprietor 2 mentioned (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2.1.) was arbitrarily arrived at. That is, it was not based on a strategy for dealing with particular challenges. The percentage could be set higher or lower or it could be removed. There is not a funding policy to regulate or a guide provided for in the policy (Working Policy U 15 of 2010, p. 544).

7.8.2 Misconception about higher education institutions

One other factor appears to be the misconception of the operation costs of an institution of higher education. The proprietors lack an understanding of the financial resources that may be required to operate a higher education institution. The data indicate that the proprietor provided one million Malawi Kwacha as initial capital and operation funds to transform the institution from a two-year ministerial diploma-granting seminary to a four-year degree-granting institution (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2). The proprietor did not realise that a higher education institution would require more academic and administrative staff of higher qualifications, better and diverse facilities, resources, infrastructure and student support services than a secondary school and that these issues have financial implications. As a result, the proprietor did not plan accordingly for ways to fund the institution; hence, they tend to be surprised by financial claims presented to them. Head 2 said:

> *Our leaders [Proprietors] like to just talk but when you say, "Let's do it now". They tell you, "We have no money". Then you say, "Then why did we open the school if we have no money?" We cannot build a good university if we rely on fees alone. Our leaders need to come up with ways of finding money but when you talk of money, they begin to wonder as if you are talking about strange things* (Interviewed on October 04, 2011, at 12h00).

Another participant in the study observed, "*When they* [Proprietors] *were mooting to establish a university, not everyone* (proprietors) *understood what kind of an animal a university is*" (VC, interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00). That is to say, the proprietors did not seek to understand and plan for the financial implications of providing higher education.

7.8.3 Inadequate planning

Another factor appears to be inadequate planning. It is evident that the proprietors believe that if they conceive and start on a building project, God would move people to come forward and support the project with financial and other resources. As I point out below, the initial operation funds that the proprietors invested to open the institution in 2004 was one million Malawi Kwacha (USD2, 857, 000.00). The act was most likely premised on faith in God's providence. From my experience, I can say that faith has 'worked' to some extent. While I was working in the institution and in the course of data-collection for this study I observed how some people and organisations contributed financially and materially towards the infrastructural development of the institution. Their acts are attributed to the power of God to move people to act in favour of the institution (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.1.3).

However, as the research findings further demonstrate (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3), the prevailing situation in the institution and the Bible indicate that faith alone is inadequate to address the challenges that an institution faces. Over the past eight years since its founding, the institution has faced such challenges as inadequate academic and nonacademic staff, lack of facilities for teaching and learning, administration, research, sports and recreation, worship, water, and so on (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3). Faith has to go together with appropriate and adequate strategic planning and action. As the Bible teaches, faith without works [proper planning and mobilization of requisite resource] is dead (James 2, 14 – 26).

Lack of proper and adequate planning tends to be conditioned by lack of accountability. That is, the proprietors are not held accountable by any other institution within or outside the sponsoring church organisation for the governance and operation of the institution. As a result, they do not adequately plan for proper funding procedures and strategies for the development and sustainability of the institution.

7.8.4 Fragmented conception of the organisation

The sponsoring church organisation operates a number of institutions including education, health, disaster and relief and regional administrative offices. Each institution including the national and regional offices operates and manages its own property, workforce and remuneration systems. As a result, the proprietors appear to have a fragmented conception of the church organisation. They tend to have a narrow view of their responsibility over the operation of the whole organisation and its institutions. Thus, their commitment to dealing with challenges that an institution faces tend to be minimal, more especially when the challenges require financial intervention. The behaviour influences the administrators in the case institution to suspect that "*They [proprietors] look at it sometimes as a competitor rather than a child of their own*" (VC, interviewed on November 10, 2011 at 15h00).

7.8.5 Adverse national economic situation

It has to be pointed out that generally, there are high levels of poverty in Malawi. It is said that in Malawi, poverty, defined as "*…a state of continuous deprivation or a lack of the basics of life*" is "widespread, deep and severe" and that it is due to the adverse economic situation and other factors (Government of Malawi and United Nations Development Programme, as quoted in Malawi. PRSP, 2002, p. 5). It was not within the goals of my study to investigate the underlying causes of poverty in Malawi. Suffice to say, however, that about 73.9 per cent of the people in Malawi live on less than USD1.25 per day (United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index, 2011, p. 5).

Adverse socioeconomic conditions affect the institution in a number of ways. First, many students lack the financial resources to enable them to pay for the full cost of services. Some of them lack even adequate funds for personal use while at the institution (refer to Chapter Six, Sections 6.3.1.3.2 and also 6.3.1.3.6). As a result, the economic situation tends to constrain the managers of the institution from raising fees to a level that could enable the institution to deal with the financial challenges it faces and operate in a financially sustainable manner (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2.1).

Second, the institution is sponsored by a Christian church organisation. The organisation's major source of income takes the form of goodwill offerings that church members are expected to liberally give. The church members' capacity to give, however, tends to be constrained by adverse economic factors. As a result, the 0.5 per cent of total income appropriated to the institution amounts to about twenty million Malawi Kwacha per annum (about USD61, 000.00) (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2.1). That is to say, the institution is affected by and co-evolves with its external economic system (Mason, 2009).

In some instances, external and internal donor agencies, trust, industries as well as private individuals donate funds for infrastructural development resources (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.1.3). However, because some of the donors are negatively affected by the adverse economic situation, they have limited commitment to funding educational programmes and infrastructure development projects.

7.8.6 Institutional policy provision regarding loans

The Working Policy (S05 of 2010, p. 459) of the sponsoring organisation prohibits the institution from borrowing money from money-lending agencies. The policy constrains the institution from borrowing funds to invest in income-generating industries. Consequently, the institution fails to operate financially viable income-generating industries to diversify sources of income. This was what the DoF (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 15h00) said:

> *And we are also looking at the option of having a bakery which will serve the institution and the community around. But we're sourcing the capital to put up the building because we can't just build from our operations as our main service right now is for our operations and appropriations.*

7.8.7 Macro governance role of the MoEST

Another factor is lack of plausible evidence that the MoEST takes responsibility in sensitizing would-be providers of higher education to the financial implications. In other words, government plays a minor role in facilitating the development of an understanding of the cost of providing higher education. As the Director remarked, "*Now, this idea of having universities is a* *very good one but it also has serious challenges … many of the universities realize that university education is expensive"*. That is, proprietors become aware of the required financial resources in the course of providing education due to a lack of initial advice.

7.9 Low Integrity, business ethics and adverse socioeconomic conditions

The institution faces challenges in connection with the availability of Internet services and ITC facilities. A donor supplied equipment, accessories and computers for Internet use. In addition, the management of the institution has made complementary investments into making Internet services available in the institution. However, due to low integrity and weak business ethics the institution faces Internet connectivity and ICT challenges as I discuss in the next paragraph below.

7.9.1 Low integrity and business ethics

The first challenge is a lack of integrity and unethical business practices by the contractors who install and provide the services. Most of the agents tend to be extrinsically motivated. They desire to make profit at the expense of good quality service by making use of poor quality materials and cheap labour. In this way, they maximize profit. The findings in this study indicated that the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) in 2009 donated computers and Internet equipment. However, the agent who installed the equipment offered a poor service. The administrators of the institution made attempts to have the agent correct the situation but they did not succeed. As a result, the institution lacks an Internet service (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.1.3).

The administration contracted and paid another agent to install and provide Internet service. However, Internet connectivity does not function as expected. MTL laid underground fibre network cables in early 2011 (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.1.3). However, by the time I compiled this report in December 2012, the agent had not yet provided the service. In other words, the contractors provide a service that is not reliable due to low levels of trustworthiness [integrity] and weak business ethics. It can be said that the contractors tend not to provide quality service and after-sale service to the satisfaction of the customer.

7.9.2 Adverse socioeconomic conditions

The second is adverse socioeconomic conditions in Malawi (refer 7.8.1.5 above). The conditions have a negative impact on Internet and ICT service providers and equipment in most areas in Malawi. Where the equipment and accessories are available, they tend to be more costly than if sourced from outside the country. However, outsourcing tends to be difficult because of the restriction on availability and the high rate of foreign exchange. Moreover, if the equipment and accessories are imported, user-cost tends to be too high for most of the users as the providers attempt to make a profit on their investment by inflating costs. Thus, Internet and ICT services tend to be less available in institutions of higher education in Malawi (MoEST, 2008, p. 25). According to Zodiac Broadcasting Station (07h00 News Bulletin, broadcast on November 11, 2012) Malawi ranks 150 out of 190 developing countries worldwide in the use of ICT. That is to say, in general, the availability and use of ICT and Internet services in Malawi tends to be rare.

7.10 Appropriately qualified and highly-skilled personnel

The findings of the study show that teachers have heavy teaching loads. Some of the student support services like counseling and guidance are weak. Some of the assistant administrative personnel lack the skills they need to effectively and efficiently carry out their duties and tasks (Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.3). These challenges are due to inadequate appropriately qualified and skilled personnel. A number of structural causal factors tend to condition the shortage of qualified and skilled personnel. In addition to the financial issues that I discussed above, there are also the following factors.

7.10.1 Protectionist values

Protectionist values underlie the employment policies of the institution. The policies prefer people who are members of the church to non-members in providing employment (Working Policy FE 70 05, paragraph 4 of 2010, p. 251). This is “concerned with maintaining institutional identity as a bulwark against all forms of apostasy” (Adrian, 2007, p. 315). I have indicated in this report that the institution is sponsored by a Christian church organisation and that one of the motives for operating the institution is to evangelise (see Section 7.1.3 above). One of the mechanisms that the sponsoring organisation uses to achieve this is to employ people who are members of the sponsoring church. The practice tends to limit the number of applicants available.

7.10.2 Organisational climate

Organisational climate is described as the total environmental quality within an organisation, usually expressed by words like open, bustling, warm, easygoing, informal, cold, impersonal, hostile, rigid, and closed (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 81). Data suggest that the "spirit is low because group members secure neither social-needs satisfaction nor task-achievement satisfaction. … the organisation seems to be stagnant" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 82). Governance, leadership behaviour and management practices tend to be authoritarian characterised by rigid, conservative leadership behaviour and management practices. The institution fails to attract new applicants for professional or highly skilled jobs. Hence, some of the existing administrators, staff and students tend to be frustrated and less satisfied with the work environment (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1). Teacher 2 said:

> *The greatest challenge is the dictatorial type of leadership that I think we're going through. There're things you're just told, "This is what has been discussed. Do it this way". There are things that you can also share and that you should also give your views or opinion on, but they are just told to you as a directive. You cannot even discuss it.*

7.10.3 Conceptualisation of sacrifice

Another underlying factor that works against adequate teaching is a misconception of the meaning of sacrifice. As Dyck & Wiebe (2012) observed, there is a relationship between organisational practice and religious beliefs about salvation: "how people understand salvation often has an influence on and coincides with changes in social and organisational structures and systems" (pp. 302 – 303). Working in the institution is considered to be a calling to work in the church. It requires sacrifice (Working Policy Y 05 of 2010, pp. 563 – 564). Sacrifice is associated with volunteering service and/or accepting low pay for the service that one has rendered. Therefore, an employee who demands a competitive remuneration package is encouraged to disconnect with the institution. This makes bargaining for competitive remuneration difficult. As a result, the institution fails to attract new staff or retain adjunct lecturers as most of them tend to be dissatisfied with the remuneration package.

7.10.4 Pool of qualified personnel

There is a relatively limited pool of appropriately qualified personnel in Malawi (Malawi. PRSP, 2002). Many appropriately qualified personnel tend to emigrate in search of greener pastures. Teacher migration has been noted to be one of the critical challenges in the Southern African Development Community (Brown, 2008, p. 285). As a result, appropriately qualified staffs tend to be scarce. Another factor tends to be job market protection policy of the government. The mechanism is activated by the application of an immigration policy that controls the provision of temporary employment permit to foreigners who seek employment in Malawi. In this case, foreign applicants have to obtain an employment permit first before they can find employment. Applicants often have to wait for almost six or more months before they are issued with a permit in the event that the application has been successful. I experienced this when I was responsible for processing and managing applications for temporary work permits of some of the expatriate missionaries in the institution. The policy tends to constrain sourcing appropriately qualified personnel from outside the country to satisfy the need for personnel thereby condition shortage of staff.

7.10.4 Staff development, inbreeding and retention strategy

In addition, the institution lacks appropriate strategies for effective staff retention incentives and development strategies that recognise “internal and external forces that impact the organisation” (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 3008, pp. 223). The sponsoring organisation does not have adequate internal sources of appropriately qualified personnel for internal recruitment. Consequently, it sources personnel from the job market. As I have indicated above, the institution has preferential recruitment policies and offers less competitive remuneration packages. As a result, it often fails to attract personnel. For instance, when the institution advertised the post of vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellor early in 2012, only three applications were received.

7.11 Ineffective communication, cultural values, and stress

Multiple causal factors give rise to the weak interpersonal relationships that exist in the institution. Different mechanisms tend to work together or in isolation to give rise to the phenomena. The limitations of the study prevent me from dealing with the mechanism involved in each phenomenon like mistrust, suspicion and lack of consultation. What this section presents, therefore, is a summary.

7.11.1 Interpersonal and organisational communication

Effective communication gets subordinates connected and working towards a common goal. It enhances solidarity. Solidarity concerns developing mutual interests, shared goals and collaboration throughout the organisation. It generates a “high degree of strategic focus, swift response to competitive threats, and intolerance of poor performance” (Goffee & Jones, 1996, p. 136 and Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). Hence, lack of effective organisational and interpersonal communication tends to weaken the solidarity and sociability and tends to generate frustration, suspicion, mistrust and apathy. In turn, these outcomes weaken team spirit and a system’s potential to adapt to the demands in its environment (Goffee & Jones, 1996; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Mason, 2008 and 2009). For example, the VC, commenting of the relationship between proprietor and the institution said, “*The* (proprietors) *are not open…. They like to do their things in secrecy based on rumours, gossip and lies. This creates a frustrating situation* (Interviewed on November 10, 2011, at 15h00) (refer to Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2.1.2.2).

7.11.2 Cultural values

I discussed the challenges that large power distance, collectivist and uncertainty avoidance values tend to generate in an organisation (see Section 7.6.1 above). As Khatri (2009, p. 2) points out, individuals or organisations may vary in their national value orientation. In professional organisations like an institution of higher learning, subordinates tend to prefer collegial to authoritarian, centralised management practices. Therefore, large power distance that tends to generate weak interpersonal relationships as the subordinates resist tendencies to be authoritarian and dictatorial (refer to Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2). For example, Teacher 2 (Interviewed on October 06, 2011, at 16h00) says:

> *The greatest challenge is the dictatorial type of leadership that I think we're going through. There're things you're just told, "This is what has been discussed. Do it this way". There are things that you can also share and that you should also give your views or opinion on, but they are just told to you as a directive.*

7.11.3 High levels of stress

Carlson & Buskist (1997) define stress as "a pattern of physiological, behavioural, emotional and cognitive response to real or imagined stimuli that are perceived as blocking a goal or endangering or otherwise threatening to our well-being" (p. 539). Stress tends to enable action. It is high levels of stress that tend to give rise to undesirable outcomes. Lack of adequate resources, facilities, infrastructure, including funds, tends to create a situation which is stressful thereby increasing levels of anxiety as teachers search for ways to deal with the situation (Pfaff, 2012). In the research site, I found that some teachers had large teaching loads. Some of the personnel lacked the skills and expertise needed to carry out their duties. Authoritarian management practices can lead to frustration and despair (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3).

According to Colparvar, Kamkar & Javadtan, (2012, p. 100) "work overload, role ambiguity, work conflict and job demands beyond skills and resources available to individuals" give rise to job stress and emotional exhaustion which give rise to deviant behaviours like unethical decision- making, rumour spreading, withholding efforts at work and slowing down the work cycle. For instance, Teacher 1 (Interviewed on October 04, 2011 at 9h00) said:

> *The challenges we face in this institution, is the work load. There are so many subjects that we have to go through and sometimes you have to take other subjects where you can't find an adjunct lecturer…. I'm supposed to teach twelve hours in a week but I teach eighteen hours….no rest or sleeping late so that you can catch up with the work load. The result is you have too much work.*

Although people tend to respond to the stressors differently depending on their personality, high levels of stress tend to make the person irritable, disorganized and generally less cooperative (Goffee & Jones, 1996; Carlson & Buskist, 1997; Santrock, 2002; Colparvar; Kamkar &

Javadtan, 2012 and Pfaff, 2012). High level of stress may account for the weak interpersonal relationships in this institution.

7.11.4 Authoritarian personality and management practices

An authoritarian personality, described as a syndrome of conservative outlooks, attitudinal intolerance and rigid cognitive functioning (Hastings & Shaffer, 2008, p. 423) tends to incline a leader to authoritarian practices. Authoritarian leaders tend not to consult often, direct discussions in such a manner as to prevent or discount subordinates' views, make decisions on little or no information and are inclined to micromanage (Black, 2002; Hastings & Shaffer, 2008 and Colparvar; Kamkar & Javadtan, 2012). Because subordinates tend to feel disrespected, the practice often generates mistrust, suspicion and fragmented relationships. In addition, subordinates tend be less motivated to effectively deal or participate in dealing with the challenges that an institution faces (Black, 2002; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Pfaff, 2012). This is the case in the research site (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1.2.3/4).

7.12 Restoration of equity, low self-concept, self-control, motivation, laxity, recreation resources and facilities, social adjustment, and laissez faire

In this section, I explain why some students engage in food wastage, beer-drinking, the use of illicit drugs and harassment of other students. The factors that tend to give rise to and condition the practices are systemic, structural and agential in nature. I outline each challenge, consider causal factors, discuss and demonstrate how these factors may generate practices.

7.12.1 Careless food wastage

This study found that some of the resident students deliberately waste food: they collect larger amounts of food and salt than they can take and throw away the excess (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.4). The challenge may be influenced by a number of factors.

7.12.1.1 Restoration of equity (fairness, balance)

The practice could be motivated by the need for equity in situations in which the doer feels unjustly treated (Santrock, 2002). Students who reside in the institutional halls of residence pay for accommodation and food in advance either for a semester or for a year. The institution does not return money for a missed meal. In this case, the students feel this is unjust as s/he has already paid for it.

7.12.1.2 Sustainable development practices

Food wastage may be owing to a lack of appreciation of and skills in sustainable economic and environmental practices. The institution offers a course on environmental issues but the theory is not put into practice in the way resources and facilities are used. Not only the students but also some of the staff do not take responsibility for the financial and environmental effects of wasting resources on other systems inside and outside the institution (Espinosa & Porter, 2011). Lack of understanding and skills in sustainable management concepts therefore, tend to manifest in both students and staff who utilise, store, monitor, and vandalise some of the resources in the institution (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.4).

7.12.1.3 Low self-concept

The study found that some of the students throw away food because other students claim that the quality of the food is poor. Students who throw away food on the basis of other students' claims may do so because of low self-concept. It has been observed that people who are low in their self-concept tend to have a low sense of self-worth. They tend to fail to make a decision on their own and hold on to it if necessary. Thus, they are more likely to uncritically follow the practices of others (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.6) (Carlson & Buskist, 1997 and Santrock, 2003 and 2004).

7.12.2 Beer-drinking and use of illicit drugs (*Indian hemp* [chamba])

A factor that tends to give rise to the use of substances like beer and illicit drugs (*chamba*) is low self-control (Miller, Toscova, Miller & Sanchez, 2000; Koning et al., 2010 and Ford &

Blumenstein, 2013). According to Gottfredson & Hirschi (in Ford & Blumenstein, 2013, p. 57) low self-control is due to “inadequate socialization, or insufficient parenting styles” in childhood. People who are low in self-control “are impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted and non-verbal”. Ford & Blumenstein (2013, p. 57) say that such people:

> will more likely be unable to resist the immediate gratification of a crime because they are unable to be forward-looking and are unable to calculate the costs… engage in drinking, smoking, and gambling … [do not] consider long-term consequences of their actions.

Beer-drinking and substance abuse in the research site tends to be conditioned by a number of other mechanisms. They include the following.

7.12.2.1 The social environment

The substances are readily available and accessible in the contiguous community at prices which the students can afford. In some cases, the students exchange the substances for old clothes, soap and other luxuries which the vendors need. In addition, some students obtain beer and/or illicit drugs free of charge from friends and acquaintances in the neighbourhood. Some of the students buy beer and *chamba* from the vendors and share with or sell to other students. Hence the dynamic interaction and interconnection between the students and the external and internal environments tends to promote and sustain the beer-drinking and use of *chamba* (Mason, 2009; Espinoza & Porter, 2011 and Ford & Blumenstein, 2013). As a result, some of the students find it difficult to resist the temptation to continue with the behaviour due to easy access to beer and *chamba* (Ford & Blumenstein, 2013, p. 64).

7.12.2.2 Motivation for social adjustment and conformity

There is a discrepancy between espoused values and practices. The findings of this study indicate that some of the students and staff who play or are expected to play leadership roles and model behaviour drink beer and/or use illicit drugs or tolerate the practices by hiding or not counseling the offenders (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1). Hence, some of the offenders’ anti-social behaviour tends to be due to lack of motivation for adjustment and/or conformity and support from peers (Koning et al., 2010 and Ford & Blumenstein, 2013).

7.12.2.3 Social adjustment and conformity problems

Some of the students come from educational institutions and families in which beer-drinking, smoking, vandalism and violating other students' rights are tolerated (Kasapila & Mkandawire, 2010 and Koning et al., 2010). In addition, it has been observed that most of the

> college students are in the years of life when such risks peak, whether or not one is in college. Leaving home for college is often a person's first major change of social environment, offering a new set of options and norms. It can be a first real testing of the person's ability to regulate his or her own behaviour (Miller, Toscova, Miller & Sanchez, 2000, pp. 745 - 746).

Therefore, they tend to face conformity and adjustment problems in the new environment owing to low self-control.

7.12.2.4 Laissez-faire student management practices

The management of students in the institution tends to be based on *laissez-faire*[15] management practices that were introduced in 2008. The laissez-faire principle is based on the belief that university students are adults. Therefore, individual students are left alone to manage themselves (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). To enable the individual students to manage themselves, the administration relaxed the application of school rules, regulations and disciplinary measures. As I pointed out above, laissez-faire was more of an adaptive mechanism to gain a sense of personal security than a management strategy for enhancing the institution's capacity to deal with the challenges it faces. In such a situation, students with low self-control face difficulties in deciding to abstain from alcohol (Ford & Blumenstein, 2013). Dynamic interaction and interconnection of agents in both the internal and external environment gives rise to emergence of new practices in which some of the students engage in drinking beer and using illicit drugs in

[15] A management principle in which leaders give freedom to a group and let individual decisions on their own (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, pp. 125 – 126).

addition to other deviant practices (Miller, Toscova, Miller & Sanchez, 2000 and Mason, 2009) (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.2).

7.12.2.5 Personal freedom

The belief that students as adults should be allowed to manage themselves tends to match what some of the students believe. It is a belief that is consistent with democratic values, therefore personal freedom (Ford & Blumenstein, 2013). For instance, Student 1 (Interviewed on November 11, 2011 at 10h00) said, *"When people get into a university, they expect a lot of free life. They expect to operate maybe without the consent of another. I also didn't expect that I am not allowed to dance"*. As a result, some of the students find it difficult to observe the rules that they perceive as limiting their freedom (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.2). Thus, personal freedom is a mechanism that tends to condition the behaviour.

7.12.3 Laxity in implementing school rules and regulations

I indicated above, there is laxity in enforcing discipline among students except for serious offences. The administration decides whether or not an offence is serious and warrants disciplinary action. As Black (2002, p. 7) points out, the "broken window theory" states that tolerance of minor problems tends to make students believe that even major problems will be tolerated. Therefore, laxity in dealing with discipline problems may explain the persistence of alcohol, vandalism and drug abuse. Also, according to Black (2002), the disorderly environment and the presence of broken materials tend to motivate students to engage in vandalism. As to this, as I have already pointed out, unrepaired furniture and equipment that lie about tend to attract students to engage in vandalism.

7.12.4 Inadequate facilities for recreation, guidance and counseling

The institution tends to lack adequate and effective resources for school counseling services for depressed, angry, frustrated or abused students and staff. As a result, staff and students who have social problems are unable to access effective and professional on-campus services (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.5). They also lack adequate facilities for recreation. As a result, some of the students engage in beer-drinking, vandalism and aggressive behaviour as ways of dealing with the “inner void”, venting anger and frustration (Black, 2002, p. 6 and Santrock, 2002).

7.13 Summary

In this chapter, using the critical realist assumption of a stratified ontology, agency and structure, and causation (refer to Chapter Five), I engaged in retroductive and counterfactual reasoning to explore possible underlying causal mechanisms that gave rise to the emergence of private higher education and the challenges that the growth and development of private higher education in Malawi faces (refer to Chapter Six). I described the possible causal mechanisms using different concepts from various disciplines including educational leadership and management, psychology and theology.

The study shows that the emergence, development and growth of private higher education has, to a large extent, been influenced by agential and/or structural as well as systemic factors. They include such factors as global trends in the provision of cross-border higher education; neo-liberal economic ideologies of international regulatory and donor agencies; the need to survive global competition for innovative technologies by accessing the global knowledge economy through ICT; and the ever rising demand for higher education knowledge as the means for national as well as personal socioeconomic development. In chapter Two I discussed these phenomena within the global context of higher education.

According to complexity theory, social systems are nested in, interact with, and are dependent on other diverse systems for survival (see Chapter Three). The study showed that some of the underlying causal factors of the challenges tend to be systemic. They include adverse macro and micro socioeconomic conditions within which the institution is located and their impact on the researched institution. The factors tend to condition lack of adequate requisite resources to enable the institution to adapt to the needs in both its internal and external environment.

On the other hand, some causes appear to be agential in the sense that they are psychological in nature. They include attitudes of proprietors, governance systems and practices; the lack of adequate strategic planning for the funding and development of the institution and for staff development; the perceived threat to job security; high levels of stress; low self-perception and self-control and the need for personal freedom.

Also, some generative mechanisms that operate in the challenges seem to be conditioned by contextual sociocultural factors. The factors tend to be linked to weak interactional and ineffective communication patterns among the agents within the institution, heterogeneity of the human and nonhuman agents, interaction patterns between agents in the institution and the proprietor, and the institution and the immediate external environment.

In the next chapter I perform three major activities: I summarise the research context, design, methodology and I present the main findings. Furthermore, given the findings of the study, I am then in a position to answer the last research question: *How could the development of private higher education in Malawi be made more sustainable?*

As a matter of recall, institutional sustainability in this study refers to practices and resources that enable an institution to perform better. Savaya & Spiro (2012, pp. 30 – 33) observe that sustainability predictors involve diversity of funding, commitment and support of the auspice organisation, involvement of initial funder, quality of leadership and community support. In open systems, predictability in the sense of long-term outcomes and/or effects is not always possible as social practices tend to be non-linear (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.5.1). Sustainability predictors in this case, concern strategies and practices that are more likely to enable a system to perform better.

Espinosa & Porter (2011), writing from a complexity perspective, include maintaining the supply of commons (water, land, air, etc.), engaging with government agencies, industries, civil society and local community to support an institution; improving on social performance (work conditions, services to community, etc.) and the intra-systems (leadership and management, and governance practices) (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.5.9). Lastly, in Chapter Eight, I present the conclusion of this study.

Chapter Eight

Summary, recommendations, and conclusion

> *Given our human constitution, the way the world is made and the necessity of interaction between them, subjects cannot avoid having concerns, which are vested in the three different orders. These are concerns about our physical well-being in the natural order, about our performative achievement in the practical order and about self-worth, in the social order* (Archer, as quoted in Fleetwood, 2008, p. 196.Emphasis in the original).

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I submitted that the emergence of private higher education in Malawi was a desirable development in dealing with critical issues of equity and access to higher education. Private higher education is enabling both school leavers and adults who need to upgrade themselves access to higher education in different ways.

However, research findings in private institutions of higher education indicate that the institutions face various challenges. Some of the challenges are common to higher education both in and outside Malawi while some tend to be contextual and unique to private institutions of higher education in particular areas (refer to Chapter One and Two).

In this chapter I present the findings of this study. I summarise the study context, design, findings and the causes of the challenges that the research site faces. I then propose ways of making private higher education more sustainable in the sense of making it perform better given the critical challenges that the institution faces.

8.2 Purpose of the study

I was motivated to carry out this research by a need to understand and explain the causes of the emergence of private higher education in Malawi, the nature and the causes of the challenges it faces so that I could explore ways to make private higher education more sustainable:

In addition, I wanted to communicate with stakeholders and other scholars about the development of private higher education in Malawi. I intended to elicit further research in the field of educational leadership and management so as to deepen and broaden our understanding of the role that private higher education is playing in Malawi and the challenges it faces. In this way, we could collectively work in transforming higher education so that it may serve society better (WCHE, 1998, p. 3).

8.3 Goals of the research

I carried out the study to achieve three overarching goals. I wanted to identify and explain, first, contextual power structures and the underlying generative mechanisms that gave rise to the emergence, development and growth of private higher education in Malawi; second, the challenges that private higher education faces in Malawi; and the underlying causal mechanisms that tend to give rise to and condition the challenges. Last, I wanted to explore ways that were likely to make private higher education more sustainable.

8.4 Theoretical framework of an organisation

I used complexity theory to understand and study an organisation (refer to Chapter Three). Briefly, the theory views organisations as social systems comprising agents [human as well as non-human entities, other systems and societies] who are interconnected, interdependent, and who interact in complex dynamic ways. The interactions and relationships are nonlinear and, therefore, may lead to unpredictable outcomes. A single cause may give rise to multiple effects just as a single outcome may be generated by multiple factors (Manson, 2001; Mason, 2009 and Morrison, 2008).

In addition, emergent phenomena in the form of new characteristics, behaviours and products and structures arise when a system reaches a certain level of critical mass. However, emergent phenomena tend to be unique to a particular context (location of a system, leadership behaviour, quality of relationships of agents, material resources and the nature and heterogeneity of constituent agents (Anderson, Crabtree, Steel & McDaniel, 2005; Haggis, 2008, Mason, 2009, Uhl-Bien et al. 2009 and Espinosa & Porter, 2011).

For systems to survive and develop they have to have “a symbiotic, coevolving relationship with the greater society and ecosystem”, (Espinosa & Porter, 2011) that is, they have to adapt to the demands that arise both within and in the external environment. To adapt, they match their level of internal complexity with the complexity in the environment (Hanna et al., 2011).

I also drew on transformational leadership theory to understand the effects of leadership behaviour and practices. Transformational leadership theory is premised on the observation that if members of an organisation are given adequate support (material, social, emotional as well as psychological), they become highly motivated to work hard, achieve more than they expected and develop a sense of well-being (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Therefore, transformational leaders aim at raising the awareness and consciousness of their followers to higher levels of conduct and morality by sharing a vision, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individual support, attending to personal and professional needs of individual subordinates, modeling best practices, coaching and establishing structures to foster participatory and collective decision-making processes (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

8.5 Research methodology

I carried out the study influenced by critical realist ontological, epistemological and etiological assumptions. Critical realists assume that whatever generates and/or influences events is real. Reality exists independently of our observations, that is, it exists whether or not we observe or imagine it. It includes thoughts, causes, powers, liabilities, intentions, beliefs, motives, reasons and concrete resources (Houston, 2010 and Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012).

We come to know through sense experience and mental processes. Our knowledge of reality is fallible however, and subject to revision or outright rejection. Nevertheless, some types of knowledge may provide us with a better understanding of reality than other types of knowledge (Danermark et al., 2002). Critical realists also assume that reality is structured. Therefore, the causes of social practices lie deep in one of the different strata of structures. As such, causes are unobservable but we become aware of their existence because of the effects that they may generate. Therefore, once we know the cause of undesirable practices, we have to seek ways to remove, prevent or reduce the effect of the cause (Danermark, et al., 2002; Fleetwood, 2004; Houston, 2010 and Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta & Mainela, 2012).

8.5 Research approach and design

To enable me to achieve the goals I summarised above, I situated the study in Malawi and utilised a case study approach.

8.5.1 Case study method

Through literature review, it dawned on me that the provision of higher education is highly contextual and that most often, the challenges it faces tend to be influenced by the local conditions in which it is provided (see Section 8.2 above). My choice of case study was therefore premised on the belief that in cases in which the nature of the conditions are similar, interventions that are designed to deal with challenges in one case may be generalisable to other cases of similar nature is similar contexts (Danermark et al., 2002). Hence, a case study approach was intended to enable me to gain an in-depth understanding of a typical case of a private institution of higher education in a real life situation (Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard, 2007 and Sharp et al., 2012). I would then be able to use the knowledge that I gained to make sense of other institutions of private higher education (refer to Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1).

I purposefully selected the research site based on a number of criteria. First, I wanted a site which I could access at low cost both in terms of time and money (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). I also looked for an institution which was one of the earliest not-for-profit institutions, accredited by state authorities as a private institution of higher education, offering full-time in contact academic programmes and had conducted at least one graduation exercise. There were three institutions that fitted the criteria. One was too far away for me and the gate-keepers in one of the remaining two institutions denied me access (refer to Chapter Five, Section 5.2).

8.5.2 Data collection and causal analysis

I used three methods to collect data: interviews, archival document content analysis and observation (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). For interviews I purposefully selected twenty-one participants. These included two proprietors of the institution, a government officer in the directorate of higher education in the MoEST headquarters, three members of the top management of the institution, two senior administrative assistants, two heads of academic departments, three teachers, one supervisor in the support industry of the institution, a librarian, a chaplain, two cafeteria staff, two students in the final year of their studies, a president of the students' representative council and a senior volunteer (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.1.3).

I initially analysed data using induction inference, resolving the data into emergent themes which were later categorised into broad themes (challenges) or categories. I then proceeded to abduct and reinterpret the data, utilising concepts from both complexity and transformational leadership theories as heuristic devices. At this stage, the intention was to surface causal links and relationships or lack of relationships in the challenges. The volume of the work in this stage constitutes chapter Six. In the last stage, I utilised abstraction as a method for engaging in abduction and a retroductive mode of inference and counterfactual reasoning to explicate possible causal mechanisms that tended to generate the challenges, and sustain [condition] the challenges to be what they are (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 43 and Houston, 2010, pp. 82 – 83). Chapter Seven presented the outcomes of this stage. Therefore, in the section 8.6 of the current chapter, I present a summary of the findings.

8.6 Summary of research findings

The findings indicate that the challenges that the emergence, development and growth of private higher education in Malawi faces are contextual, structural, systemic and agential in nature.

8.6.1 Emergence of private higher education

The critical challenge in the emergence of private higher education was lack of structures and systems in the MoEST for processing applications to establish and/or accredit private institutions of higher education and for monitoring and controlling their operations (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.1.2). MoEST officials, rather than admit that they faced a challenge, kept proposing dates for on-site visits. They inspected and accredited the programmes four years after the institution had opened. The challenge affected the research site in that MoEST did not allow students from the institution to carry out teaching practice in government secondary schools. As a result, students, guardians and parents suspected the credibility and authenticity of the academic programmes that the institution offered (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.1.2).

8.6.2 Challenges in the development of private higher education

Critical challenges that the development of private higher education faces can generally be put into four categories for heuristic purposes: systemic; structural; contextual and agential. I summarise the challenges as follows:

a. Systemic challenges

i. Lack of structures and systems in the form of policies, procedures, and guidelines for effective governance and accountability;

ii. Lack of adequately qualified teachers, administrators and skilled support staff;

iii. Weak management and control systems in the form of policies, guidelines and procedures for utilization of resources and facilities of the institution;

iv. Lack of effective structures in the form of committees for the management and control of students;

v. Lack of adequate facilities and physical structures to support teaching-learning functions (halls of residence for male students, a cafeteria and associated facilities; staff residences; teaching-learning; classrooms; halls and theatres; library).

b. Structural challenges

i. High levels of authoritarian practices in governance and management practices and leadership behaviours;

ii. Weak interpersonal relationships between the proprietors and the administrators; between institutional leaders and followers; and between rich and poor students;

iii. Lack of effective interpersonal and organisational communication skills.

c. Contextual challenges

i. Lack of reliable campus-wide, 24-hour Internet services;

ii. Limited financial support from the proprietors;

iii. Lack of adequate funds to invest in infrastructural development and to offer competitive remuneration packages;

iv. Lack of diverse sources of funding to supplement fees;

v. Lack of diverse and expanded academic programmes to cater for various interests of students;

vi. Lack of adequate learner support services such as counseling; work programme; financial aid; etc.

vii. Lack of adequate financial and material support from the wider community.

d. Agential challenges

i. Vandalism, alcohol consumption and use of illicit drugs (*Indian hemp* [chamba]);

ii. Integrity of contractors;

iii. Administrators' lack of commitment to observe and foster the values, beliefs, behavioural standards of the proprietors;

iv. Lack of accountability on the part of proprietors.

8.7 Underlying causal mechanisms of the emergence of private higher education and the challenges it faces

I discussed the underlying causes of the challenges in Chapter Seven. As I indicated elsewhere in this report (refer to Chapter Three, Section 3.5.2 and Chapter Four, Section, 4.1.2), causes from the CR and CT perspective are structural properties and entities that produce or generate or create or determine or constrain something or some event (Sayer, 2000). They might be reasons, material resources, social structures, norms, rules, discourses or reasons agents have for their actions (Kurki, 2007, pp. 364 – 366). A single cause can generate a single challenge or many challenges just as a single challenge can have multiple causes (Byrne, 2005, p. 97). In the following sections I present a summed up outline of the causal mechanisms of the emergence of private higher education in Malawi and the underlying causal mechanisms of the challenges in the research site.

8.7.1 Emergence of private higher education

8.7.1.1 Agential factors

Private higher education is an emergent phenomenon from heterogeneous agents' efforts in challenging social structures that imposed severe constraints on the agents from accessing higher education; the need to diversify academic programmes and expand the provision of higher education, and the need to evangelise and transform communities. It also emerged from an agential need to survive economic challenges that arise in both the internal and external environment in which case, higher education knowledge was viewed as a commodity of trade. Thus, agents started providing private higher education long before the MoEST liberalised the provision of higher education.

8.7.1.2 Contextual and systemic factors

The emergence of private higher education was also possibly caused by the need to survive the global competition for socioeconomic development. It has been observed that higher education knowledge tends to be instrumental for national and personal socioeconomic development (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Thus, to survive the competition, agents demand access to and utilization of higher education knowledge as an enabling power for innovation and economic development. Thus, to enable as many people as possible to access higher education knowledge, governments worldwide, including Malawi, have liberalised and are expanding the provision of higher education (Morley, Leach & Lugg, 2008); hence, the emergence of private higher education.

8.7.1.3 Structural factors

Private higher education also emerged as the government's response to dealing with the demand for access to higher education (refer to 6.3.1.1). The demand had built up over the years because of a lack of political will to attend to the demand. However, the demand escalated following the structural adjustment in the provision of primary education that was initiated in 1994. In order to manage the demand, government engaged the private sector to participate in the provision of higher education. A causal factor that gave rise to private higher education was demand for access to higher education.

8.7.2 Systemic, agential and contextual causes of the challenges

The possible causes of the challenges tend to be interrelated, interconnected and interwoven. The outlining served clarification and analytical purposes only. As I have indicated, the possible causal factors are interrelated, interwoven and tend to operate in complex ways, not in an orderly manner as I present in this report. They include the following:

8.7.2.1 Need for power and authority

A possible likely underlying causal factor that tends to give rise to authoritarian governance practices of the proprietors appears to be the need to protect one’s position of power and authority. The mechanism that is used appears to be the suppression of open discussion for fear of the consequences of being seen to be ineffective and incompetent. Another likely mechanism is the attempt to obscure transparency in the way the institution is governed and managed. This tends to be achieved by playing down the need to develop and implement management systems, policies and guidelines that clearly indicate individuals’ responsibilities and accountability and administrative/governance structures (Harman & Treadgold, 2007).

Lack of clear policies, guidelines and structures tend to enable the proprietor to shift to the institutional leaders the responsibility and accountability for the way the institution is governed, managed and funded. The shifting of responsibility and accountability tends to be sustained by cultural values such as large power distance and collectivist values. The values tend to influence the constituency [members of the sponsoring organisation] administrators and staff in the institution to avoid demanding of the proprietors an account of the performance of the institution (Hofstede, 1997). That is, the proprietors using agents to weaken the structures so as to protect their positions and authority.

8.7.2.2 Threat to personal security

Another possible underlying causal factor for lack of consultation, fear, suspicion and mistrust tends to be the perceived threat to personal security and authoritarian attitude of the leaders. Attempts to challenge or question decisions or express dissatisfaction are likely to trigger authoritarian behaviour as an adaptive mechanism towards feelings of vulnerability (Strauss, Connerley & Ammermann, 2003, pp. 35 - 36). Hence, some of the institutional leaders and the proprietors tend to avoid designing and implementing clear structures for participative and collective decision-making and problem-solving processes, plant secret informers and micromanage. This behaviour in turn gives rise to suspicion and fear (Hastings & Shaffer, 2008).

To be popular and acceptable among students, the administrators often tend to apply laissez faire management principles. In this way, they avoid holding students and staff responsible for the behaviours that are in conflict with the rules of the institution and the sponsoring organisation. Thus, some students and staff use agential powers to deal with certain aspects of the structures to their own advantage. Due to laxity in enforcing discipline, offenders seldom get punished thereby reinforcing the behaviour (Black, 2002). Thus, some of them engage in vandalism, drug abuse and beer-drinking and food wastage.

8.7.2.3 Misconception and/or misunderstanding of an institution of higher education

There appears to be misconceptions and/or misunderstandings concerning how the cost of funding higher education happens. It appears that the proprietors tend to believe that the fees that the institution collects are adequate to fund the operation and capital development needs of the institution. The proprietors appeal to a principle of self-reliance whereby each of its institutions is urged to provide for its own financial sustainability. In this case, the administrators are urged to manage and operate the institution using the fees and other funds that the institution can manage to raise. In this way, the proprietors avoid being responsible for funding the institution (refer to Chapter Six, Sections 6.3.2.1.1.3 and 6.3.3.2). Therefore, the level of commitment of the proprietors to fund the institution is low.

The institution tends to heavily depend on fees for its operations and capital development costs (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2.1). Lack of adequate and diverse sources of funds tend to constrain the capacity of the institution to offer competitive remuneration packages, develop infrastructures, provide facilities to support the teaching-learning function, diversify academic programmes, engage in staff development and provide sports, entertainment and recreation facilities. In addition, the institution also fails to substantially invest in income-generating industries to diversify sources of funding (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2).

8.7.2.4 Change of values and attitude toward education

Low funding of the institution tends to be influenced by a change of values of the proprietors and therefore, their attitude toward the provision of education. Financial investment in the provision of education as a strategy for evangelisation and transformation of communities tends to be perceived as an expense that should be avoided rather than managed (2012 Division Financial Survey Committee Report of the Executive Committee). As a result, the proprietors tend to be less interested in making adequate financial investment in the development of the institution or in effectively dealing with financial challenges that the institution faces (Action Plans to Implement Recommendations of the Division Financial Survey, 2012). Proprietors also tend to use agency to avoid complying with operating policy provisions of the sponsoring organisation and shift the responsibility on to the administrators of the institution (refer to Chapter Seven, Section 7.5.1).

8.7.2.5 Low organisational climate

It has been observed that people tend to be interested in associating themselves with attractive and well-resourced institutions. A number of factors tend to give rise to the depressed organisational climate. These factors include lack of adequate facilities and resources, low pay, weak interpersonal relationships and authoritarian leadership behaviour (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). The findings indicate that the organisational climate of the institution tends to be generally low (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3). It is likely that this phenomenon tends to constrain potential personnel from taking up a full-time job or keeping an adjunct job appointment for more than a year.

8.7.2.6 Inadequate strategic planning

There is little evidence of strategic planning for the establishment, development and operation of the institution. The inadequate strategic planning appears to be influenced by a belief that when a project is started for however little financial capital and other resources, God would influence people to support the project with whatever means at their disposal. As a result, the proprietor and the administrators tend to do little planning and preparation to source funds and support a project to its completion (refer to Chapter Six, Sections 6.3.2.1.1.3 and 6.3.3.2). There are evidences that could be interpreted as confirmation of the outcomes of the belief. However, faith requires that a believer matches belief with works; that is, the believer ought to make the necessary preparation for whatever he or she wants to achieve. That is, faith and actions have to go together (James 3, 14 – 17). Lack of adequate strategic planning and action may account for the financial challenges that the institution faces.

8.7.2.7 Perceived threat of false doctrines and apostasy

The administrators in the institution prefer hiring members of the sponsoring church organisation as opposed to people of different religious persuasion (Working Policy FE 70 05, paragraph 4 of 2010, p. 251). However, the sponsoring church organisation does not have an adequate pool of professionally qualified and skilled people to satisfy the need for administrative, academic and non-academic personnel (Adrian, 2007). As a result, the institution faces the challenge of a lack of adequate appropriately qualified personnel. The perceived threat of false doctrines and apostasy tends to be an underlying causal factor that tends to constrain the institution from hiring adequate personnel thereby dealing with the need for appropriately qualified and skilled personnel.

8.7.2.8 Lack of role models

The findings of the study indicate that some of the staff tend to publicly challenge and reject the school rules that prohibit drinking beer and that some staff in the institution drink beer. Conflict between the values in practice and the implementation of school rules tends to leave a lack of role models after whom to pattern their behaviour (Black, 2002 and Koning et al., 2010). Lack of models and the prevention of the implementation of school rules tend to condition the alcohol problems that the institution faces.

8.7.2.9 Adverse socioeconomic situation

The institution is situated in an adverse macro socioeconomic environment with high levels of inflation and poverty (Malawi. PRSP, 2002, p. 5 and United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index, 2011, p. 5). As a result, both the sponsoring organisation and the institution are directly affected by the adverse socioeconomic conditions in the external environment (Morrison, 2008 and Mason, 2009) in that the conditions tend to constrain the capacity of church members from giving substantial liberal offerings, some of which could be used to support the operations of the institution and also constrain potential donors in the wider community from donating materials and services to the institution. The conditions also tend to constrain the capacity of students and/or guardians to raise the fees that the institution could use to enable it to set cost-effective fees (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.2.1). As a result, the institution tends to be less able to procure and mobilize requisite resources to enable it to adapt to the demands in its environment (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3).

8.7.2.10 Low pool of qualified and skilled personnel

The pool of appropriately qualified and skilled personnel nationally tends to be small in Malawi (Malawi. PRSP, 2002 and United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index, 2011). As a result, the demand for professionally qualified personnel tends to be high. In turn, the remuneration package that the potential recruits demand tends to be too high for the institution to afford (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.3).

8.7.2.11 Lack of efficient Internet and ICT resources

The adverse socioeconomic situation tends to make ICT equipment and resources not readily available locally. In cases where the materials are available, they tend to be expensive. The scarcity and resultant high cost of foreign exchange and lack of adequate funds on the part of the institution tend to constrain the institution from acquiring ICT equipment and making Internet service widely available within the institution (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3.1.3).

8.7.2.12 Weak interpersonal and organisational communication skills

Large power distance and collectivist values tend to influence followers to avoid openly challenging undesirable practices in the institution and to look for ways to maintain friendly relationships. The values also often influence leaders to interpret attempts to challenge their ideas and/or decisions as an assault on their person and as evidence of disrespect (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1.2.4; Hofstede, 1997 and Rinne, Steel & Fairweather, 2012). Effective interpersonal and organisational skills might deal with the challenge. However, it appears that weak interpersonal and organisational communication skills may be an underlying cause of the challenge.

8.7.2.13 Inadequate understanding of the institution's policies and procedures

The findings of the study show that administrators in the institution tend to misinterpret the practices of the proprietors in redeploying some staff in the institution. It is likely that the misinterpretation is influenced by an inadequate understanding of the structures, systems and procedures that the sponsoring organisation utilises to manage and control personnel in the institutions of the organisation.

The inadequate understanding appears to result in weak interpersonal relationship between the administrators and the proprietor causing frustration and suspicion (Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.1.1). It is also appears to be an underlying cause of discipline problems. In this case, the administration fails to appreciate and promote the values, beliefs and standards of behaviour that the sponsoring organisation espouses. Instead, the administrators apply management practices whose outcomes tend to be in conflict with the values of the proprietor (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.2).

8.7.2.14 Need to restore equity

It seems some students waste food because they tend to believe that they have already paid for it and that saving food would not be to their financial advantage but would increase the institution’s profit instead. In other words, by deliberately wasting food, the students appear to be dealing with a practice that they consider unjust and unfair. Therefore, it seems that the need to restore equity is an underlying causal factor of food wastage.

Another likely causal factor of food wastage may be lack of environmental and economic sustainability skills. This may also account for vandalism. That is, some students may not be aware of the effects of food wastage and vandalism on the operational costs and the consequent impact on fees and other charges that the institution tends to levy (Comm & Mathaisel, 2006). In other words, they tend to be ignorant of the financial consequences of the practices.

8.7.2.15 Low self-control

It has been observed that some students often fail to resist the temptation to use illicit substances (Miller, Toscova, Miller & Sanchez, 2000 and Ford & Blumenstein, 2013). The behaviour tends to be further conditioned by the wide availability of the substances (Black, 2002 and Ford & Blumenstein, 2013). In the case at hand, cheap beer and *chamba* is available on demand from vendors in the contiguous community. Therefore, the use of drugs and alcohol may be due to low self-control. Low self-control tends to predispose a person to face adjustment and conformity problems in new environments (Koning et al., 2010 and Ford & Blumenstein, 2013).

8.7.2.16 Conceptualisation of freedom

Administrators appear to apply laissez-faire (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008) as a strategy in managing students. They do this in an attempt to enable them to exercise personal freedom in choosing the way they want to behave but also to be popular and gain acceptance among students. However, the administration tends not to hold the students accountable for their behaviour when it is in conflict with school rules. Thus, failure to hold students responsible for their behaviour tends to motivate some students to engage in vandalism, drug abuse and excessive drinking. It is also appears to be one of the factors that tends to give rise to the conflict between the proprietor and the administrators (Black, 2002) (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.2 and 6.3.1.3.4).

8.7.2.17 Low self-esteem

Weak interpersonal relationships between students from financially-advantaged and disadvantaged family backgrounds (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.6) may be generated by low self-esteem. High self-esteem tends to influence a person to be assertive. That is, high self-esteem tends to influence a person to be in control of his/her life situation, to evaluate possible behavioural options available to him/her and to choose how to act in a given situation. On the other hand, low self-esteem tends to influence a person to avoid being assertive and to defer to authority. Therefore, the person tends to let his/her life situation be managed by others (Santrock, 2004 and Ford & Blumenstein, 2013).

8.7.2.18 Job stress

A possible causal factor of weak interpersonal relationships between the administration and staff and administration and the proprietors appears to be job stress. It has been observed that job stress results from work overload and work conflict that tends to lead to deviant and counterproductive behaviours among employees (Colparvar, Kamkar & Javadtan, 2012). Job stress also tends to make people highly irritable and less inclined to engage in creative problem-solving, conflict resolution and collective decision-making processes or support collective decision-making (Carlson & Buskist, 1997, Santrock, 2003 and Pfaff, 2012).

8.7.3 Summary

The possible causes of the challenges that the institution faces are of different natures. The causes tend to interact in complex various ways at different levels and tend to give rise to different but also similar outcomes that tend to impact on the institution’s capacity to effectively adapt to the demands that arise in its internal and external environment. Some causal factors are psychological (perceived threat to personal security, authoritarian attitudes, self-perception, stress, etc.); still others are structural (ideological, values, beliefs, and bureaucratic practices and policies), systemic (financial, global trends in the provision of higher education and the knowledge economy); some possible causal factors are contextual (the macro as well macro socioeconomic and global neo-liberal economic ideological factors); yet some possible causes tend to be agential in nature (personal intentions, personal power, motives and interests).

8.8 Recommendations: Making private higher education more sustainable

I observed in Chapter One, Section 1.1 that the emergence of private higher education is making higher education more accessible to certain categories of people who might not have accessed higher education before. It addition, private institutions of higher education are making higher education more equitable. As Levy (2009) observes, private higher education is growing and developing fast world-wide including in Africa in spite of various and complex challenges it faces. In Malawi, whereas there were four accredited private institutions of higher education in 2004, there were over seven of them by December 2012. As I indicated in Chapter One, the issue centres on making the development sustainable:

> If the first challenge of change is to ensure that it is desirable, and the second challenge is to make it doable, then the biggest challenge of all is to make it durable and sustainable (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 2).

I summarised the concept of sustainability from a CT perspective in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.9. In this section, I applied the concept to explore ways to make private higher education more sustainable. According to Mason (2009, p. 114):

> In the complexity of the educational environment, the plethora of relevant constituent elements – agents and structures – includes teachers, students, parents and other community leaders, the state and its education departments, economic structures and business organizations, NGOs, agencies, and so on. Intervention to differing but sufficient extents in each of these areas is what would probably be necessary to shift a prevailing ethos in education. In other words, change and sustainable development in education, at whatever level, are not so much a consequence of effecting change in one particular factor or variable, no matter how powerful the influence of that factor.

However, given the limitation of this paper, it was not possible to present a detailed description of various ways in which private higher education may be made more sustainable. However, drawing on the possible causes of the challenges that I have given, the following ways might contribute towards sustainability.

8.8.1 Governance

Harman and Treadgold (2007, p. 26) argue that people and relationships are at the heart of organisations. Cesar (in Harman & Treadgold, 2007, p. 26) observe, “a governance system can operate with imperfect structures and processes, but if leadership is missing and relationships and trust damaged, the governance system will likely fail”. That is, governance ought to enable effective interpersonal and organisational communication between a proprietor and institutional leaders to take place so as to build and promote positive relationship.

Therefore, there is a need for having clear, documented and accessible governance policies, guidelines and structures for accountability and responsibility and to abide by the provisions of such structures. In this way, it may be possible to provide

> an environment of trust, ethics, moral values and confidence – as a synergic effort of all the constituents of society – that is the stakeholders, including government; the general public etc; professional/service providers, - and the corporate sector (Aras & Crowther, 2008, p. 434).

In addition, there is a need for governors and proprietors to visit their institutions and interact with the members of the institution so as to appreciate the challenges and opportunities that the institution faces. It may be possible in this way, to make decisions that are relevant in the sense that the decision would address specific challenges that an institution faces. Harman & Treadgold (2007, p. 23) assert that faculty members and students expect to be consulted and to participate in making important decisions that affect them. Therefore there is a need for dynamic interaction and interdependence between the proprietor and the institution (Harman & Treadgold, 2007, p. 23).

8.8.2 Application for registration as a private provider of higher education

The findings in this study show that some proprietors tend to have misconceptions about the governance and management of institutions of higher learning. The findings further indicate that the situation is not unique to the research site. The Director said:

> *Many of the universities realize that university education is expensive. As such, they need to have high quality individuals to be in these institutions. Unfortunately, it has been tough to find staff to teach in these universities* (Interviewed on December 22, 2011 at 11h20).

It would be better therefore for the state-accrediting body to require of a prospective proprietor evidence of availability of initial funds for acquiring resources, facilities and personnel to enable the proprietor to operate an institution of higher education.

In addition, the state-accrediting body should discuss with individual proprietors the challenges they face in providing education and how they deal and/or intend to deal with the challenges. The discussions should be scheduled on a regular basis as a transformational process (Tafvelin, Armelius & Westerberg, 2011 and Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

8.8.4 Private-Public Partnership

Cheng (2009) says that the private sector accounts for a large share of institutions of higher education in different regions worldwide (p. 51). In Malawi, I have observed that the number of state-accredited private universities increased from four in 2004 to more than seven in 2012. The ownership and management of such institutions is private. However, the students are public in the sense that they are citizens of Malawi. Hence, they are entitled to public higher education. Through Private-Public Partnership, government ought to get actively involved by giving scholarships to students who qualify for admission into a public institution but are admitted into a private institution owing to capacity constraints in public higher education. The practice would not only enable the students to concentrate more on their education than on sourcing fees but also equitably share public resources. The institutions, in turn, would have the certainty of having income from a reliable source.

8.8.5 Government subsidy

In addition, government should consider giving subsidies to private institutions to enable them to cut down on operation costs. They need not be in the form of direct financial subsidy. Rather, it could be in a form of a waiver on surtax and duty on the cost of construction and instruction materials and instructional resources and equipment that institutions purchase for infrastructure development and for instruction. This would enable providers to procure materials that are required to offer science and technology programmes and to modernise facilities.

8.8.6 Private higher education association

There is a need to form an association of private higher education providers. Among other issues, the association could discuss and deal with challenges that are common to their institutions and engage government on policy matters that are likely to negatively impact on the provision of private higher education. The providers could also make bulk purchases of instructional supplies and other materials thereby saving on cost (Comm & Mathaisel, 2006 and 2007).

8.8.7 Information and Communication Technology

The importance of ICT in institutions of higher education and society in general is well known and generally accepted (Comm & Mathaisel, 2007 and Malawi. MoEST, 2008). It is advisable that government facilitates the development and availability of ICT equipment and facilities at subsidized cost to institutions of higher education whether public or private (Malawi. Malawi.MoEST, 2008). The discriminatory provision of state services to higher education on the basis of ownership tends to put students in private institutions at a disadvantage. Yet to most of the students, admission into a private institution is not an option.

Besides, among other numerous benefits, ICT enables students and staff to access information. It alleviates institutional operational costs by reducing the workforce and tracking management of materials. Lower operational costs will impact on fees levied.

8.8.8 Opening up to research

I indicated that one of the private institutions of higher education denied me access to carry out my study in the institution. Carrying out research is one of the core missions of higher education (refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.3). Therefore, an institution of higher education itself ought to be open to scholarly research. It would be helpful if institutions of private higher education opened up to research. The findings would enlarge and deepen our understanding and conceptualisation of private higher education in Malawi. In addition, the information could be used to design interventions that are likely to effectively address the challenges that private higher education faces. This would contribute toward making private higher education more relevant, sustainable and instrumental to the socioeconomic transformation of the country.

8.8.9 Financial and material support

The industry, corporate world and employers of the graduates have to be encouraged to actively support and participate in contributing towards the sustainability of private higher education (Espinoza & Porter 2011 and Savaya & Spiro, 2012). They could do so in the form of offering scholarships to needy students; awards to students whose academic performance is improving; establishing a foundation to fund various infrastructural development projects; construct students and staff residences and rent them out to students and staff at comparatively lower rent than the market value and hand over the property to the institution when it is fully depreciated. Employers of graduates from a PIHE could be requested to make a certain payment to the institution of origin of a graduate who is hired by an employer or the proposed association of private institutions of higher education. The amount to be paid could be negotiated by the Employers Consultative Council and the proposed association of private institutions of higher education. The association could determine how the funds could be managed and disbursed.

8.8.10 Learner and staff support services

The study findings indicate that some students who come from socioeconomically strong backgrounds tend to abuse and harass in various ways students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds; leaving abused students traumatised and depressed (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.6). The study further shows that some staff tends to engage in practices that are inconsistent with the core values and norms of the institution (refer to Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1.3.2). Authorities need to consider hiring appropriately qualified and self-motivated personnel to offer counselling services on a full-time basis.

8.7 Limitations of the study

I carried out the study with a view to understanding the underlying causes of the emergence and development of private higher education in Malawi and the underlying causal mechanisms driving the challenges it faces using a single case approach. Although the study was intensive in its approach (Sayer, 2000 and Danermark et al., 2002), it was limited to a single case in its scope and context. It may be argued as other scholars have argued against intensive research finding, that findings are relative (Danermark et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the applicability of an intensive critical realist study, like the finding of most of researches in other traditions, to a large extent rests on the existence of fitness of the transfactual conditions and context of the origin and target settings (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 77).

Further research should investigate how extensive the challenges are and their underlying causes, focusing on both not-for-profit and for-profit PIHEs in the country. The findings would further enlarge and deepen our understanding of the challenges that PIHEs face and their impact on the provision and quality of higher education.

8.9 Reflections

I carried out this study using a methodology that is informed by critical realist assumptions. As a meta-theory, I found the critical realist assumption of the dimensions (Danermark et al., 2002) of knowledge very enlightening. It enabled me to become aware of the limitations and fallibility of social theories. In addition, the assumption of agency and structure, causation and a stratified ontology (Mingers, 2004) enabled me to become aware of the complexity of social practices, that events have underlying drivers, and that human beings tend to have the capacity to work their way out of the constraints that they face.

This study has gained from these assumptions in that I have been able to critically examine organisational leadership and management practices that I had unquestioningly held to be true, and become aware of agential practices and how these affect organisational performance either negatively or positively. This has been particularly the case in respect of governance practices. The assumptions also enabled me to search for deep, underlying causes of the challenges that the research site faces. Chapter Seven of the report reflects the critical realist application to the study.

Nevertheless, I found the critical realist retroduction mode of inference to be a challenge in that it tends to be an endless circular activity. In spite of Fleetwood's (2008) argument, it appears to me that from a critical realist point of view, there may not be "uncaused causes". That is, all causes including reflexive deliberation, reasons and structures, may have causes (Fleetwood, 2008).

In addition, retroduction, like abduction, seems to mostly rest on intelligent guesses to arrive at generative mechanisms. Therefore, while causal analysis cannot be based on perception alone (Bergin, Well & Owen, 2008, p. 172), it need not be based only on abduction and retroduction either. There may be a need for more rational ways of identifying causes rather than retroductive inference (Prowse, 2010). On the other hand, given that critical realist research uncovers tentative and fallible causes of events – or non-events – intelligent guesswork may well be a highly appropriate approach to adopt. In this sense the approach encourages a creative approach to research.

Also, a critical realist study often aims at surfacing the underlying causes of social phenomena. In this light, it tends to go beyond the meanings people give to their action to delving into the causes. However, although understanding underlying causes of educational practices is significant, it is equally important to gain a deeper understanding of what providing higher education means to the providers.

8.10 Conclusion

This section of this chapter marks the end of this dissertation. The report provides answers to four questions (refer to Chapter One, Section 3):

- What conditions made the emergence of private higher education in Malawi possible?
- What challenges does private higher education in Malawi face?
- What are the underlying causal factors of the challenges?
- How can the development of private higher education in Malawi be made more sustainable?

This chapter contains the answers to these questions in summary form. I believe that stakeholders in the field of educational leadership and management will find the information useful in providing guidelines for interventions to enable private higher education to be more sustainable. The information may also be used to inform public policy in the management and provision of private higher education.

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Zodiac Broadcasting Station, 07h00 news bulletin, November 11, 2012.

Appendix 1: Interactive interview schedules

A. Proprietors

Can you, please, tell me the background to the establishment of this institution?
What is the mission of this institution?
What is the vision of the institution?
What is your role in the institution?
How do you ensure that the institution performs according to its mission?
Please, tell me the role that this institution is playing in Malawi.
Please, tell me the challenges the institution faces.
How do the challenges affect the institution?
Can you, please, explain how you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results so far?

B. Vice chancellor

How did you find yourself here?
What is the mission of this institution?
What is the vision of this institution?
What is it like to you work in this university?
How do ensure that the institution becomes what you desire it to be?
How do you ensure that the institution lives its mission?
What challenges is the university facing?
How do the challenges affect the institution?
How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results?
How do you ensure that the institution offers education of high quality?
Can you, please, describe to me the quality of relationship that exists between the institution and members of the local community, the Malawi government and other universities within/outside Malawi?

C. Director of finance

What is your role in this institution?
How do you source funds to finance the operations and capital development projects?
What challenges do you face in managing the institution?
How do the challenges affect the institution?
How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results?

D. Director of higher education

Can you, please, tell me what your role in the Directorate of Higher Education is?
Can you explain how there are private institutions of higher education?
What role are thee institutions playing in higher education?
What challenges do you face in the private higher education sector?
How do the challenges affect the delivery of higher education?

How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results?
What do you do to ensure that the private institutions offer high quality higher education?
What do you do to make the development of private higher education sustainable?

E. Dean of student affairs

What is the vision of this institution?
What is the mission of this institution?
What role do you play in this institution?
What is it like to play your role in this institution?
How does your work affect the development of this institution?
Can you describe to me the student services that this institution offers to its students?
What influences learners to come to this institution?
What challenges do you face in your work here?
How do the challenges affect the mission of the institution?
How do you deal with the challenges?
How successful have you been in dealing with the challenges?

F. Heads of departments

How did you find yourself here?
What role do you play in this institution?
What has been your experience working at this university?
What challenges does your department face?
How do the challenges affect the institution?
How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results?
How do you ensure that the institution offers high quality education?
What is done to ensure high quality education?

G. Heads of non-academic departments

How do you understand your role in the context of the university's vision and mission?
What has been your experience working at this university?
Can you, please, describe to me the challenges that you face in this department?
How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results in the way you deal with the challenges?

H. Administrative officers

How do you understand your role in the context of the university's vision and mission?
How does the institution determine the qualification for admission of students?
What challenges do you face in your department?
How do the challenges affect your work?
How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results in the way you deal with the challenges?

I. Staff/Faculty member

How did you find yourself here?
Can you, please, tell me what your work involves?
What challenges do you face in carrying out your duties?
How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results?

J. SRC President

What role does the LRC play on this campus?
What is your role in the LRC?
Can you, please, describe to me the relationship between the LRC and the management of the institution?
What challenges does the LRC face?
How do you deal with the challenges?
What have been the results?

K. Learners

How did you find yourself here?
What have been your experiences learning at this institution?
What do you do to make your stay here successful?
What have been the results?

Appendix 2: Letter from supervisor

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8384
Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
E-mail: h.vandermescht@ru.ac.za

20 June 2011
The Vice Chancellor
XX University

Dear Sir

<u>Permission to conduct research in your institution</u>

Mr Mozecie Kadyakapita (student number 69710046) is a registered Doctoral student in the Faculty of Education of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa in the field Educational Leadership and Management.

Mr Kadyakapita is investigating private higher education in Malawi, with particular emphasis on management, leadership and sustainability. He plans to do a case study in two private institutions of higher learning. The purpose of this letter is to seek your permission and allow Mr Kadyakapita access to documents and members of staff, as well as the physical environment for observation purposes. He will make the necessary ethical arrangements with everyone he speaks to, and of course confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed.

Please assist Mr Kadyakapita in whatever way is within you power. Doctoral research is hard work and researchers need all the help they can get. Mr Kadyakapita is a very good student and is likely to produce findings which benefit higher education generally, as well as your university in particular.

Thank you in anticipation. Please feel free to contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht
(Supervisor)

Appendix 3: Permission to conduct research

Malawi Adventist University
P.O. Box 148 NTCHEU, Malawi

Phone: 0 881 518 166/ 0 996 151 197
Website: www.mau.ac.mw
Email: mauni@mau.ac.mw

An Affiliate of University of Eastern Africa, Baraton
All correspondence should be addressed to the Vice Chancellor

13th August, 2011

Mr M. S. J. Kadyakapita,

Malawi Union Mission,

Box 591,

Blantyre.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MALAWI ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

I am writing to inform you that ADCOM of 9th August accepted your request to conduct your research at this university. You are therefore permitted to collect data from both staff and students.

Welcome to Malawi Adventist University.

Sincery yours,

Stevie S.K. Moyo

University Registrar

MALAWI ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY
13 AUG 2011
UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR
P.O. BOX 148, NTCHEU.

A Seventh-day Adventist Institution of Higher Learning