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External Actors in Forming National ICT Policy in Malawi: A Cause for Concern in Low-Income Countries?

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External Actors in the Formulation of a National Information and Communication Technology Policy in Developing Countries such as Malawi

Research Paper

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines external actors in the formulation of national Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy. It questions how external actors overtly or covertly influence formulation of a national ICT policy following that nearly 84% of the countries in Africa have formulated national ICT policies most of which have been influenced by external actors. The paper uses Bourdieu's Theory of Practice to analyse effects of external actors' influences in developing countries using Malawi as the case. Document analysis is used to analyse external actors' influences in policy documents, minutes of policy actors' meetings and policy reports. The paper finds that developing countries cannot do without the contribution of external actors in the formulation of national ICT policies. The study did not identify any link between policy formulation and country context. The findings offer stakeholders of public policy important insights into how they can manage external actors during the policy process.

Keywords

National ICT policy, policy actors, policy formulation, developing countries, Malawi.

INTRODUCTION

A national Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy is “an integrated set of decisions, guidelines, laws, regulations, and other mechanisms geared to directing and shaping the production, acquisition, and use of ICTs” (Marcelle, 2000, p.39). National ICT policies play an important role in the attainment of socio-economic development and alleviation of poverty of countries (Thompson & Walsham, 2010) and are important in enhancing democracy, service delivery, information dissemination and the general diffusion of ICTs (Amoretti, 2007; Balamoune-Lutz, 2003).

The formulation of national ICT policies in developing countries involves local actors as well as external actors. In this paper, local actors are those national (domestic) participants who take part during formulation of a public policy. This definition excludes international organisations that are based in the country where the policy is implemented. The term external actor refers to non-national (foreign) players that may influence the policy process. These actors may include bilateral and multilateral donors.

Nearly 84% of the countries in Africa have formulated national ICT policies (Adam & Gillwald, 2007), most of which have been influenced by external actors (Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula, 2013). Since the last study by Adam & Gillwald (2007), not much has been documented on other countries that have developed national ICT policies in Africa. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies on the effects of the external actors' influences on the policies (Kunyenje & Chigona, 2017). This paper is aimed at extending previous research on influence of external actors during formulation of national ICT policies by analysing the effects of the influences. This analysis may help managers and stakeholders of public policy to devise strategies for managing the external actors during the policy process. Influence denotes motivation, resources, expertise and power balance during a national ICT policy making. The paper is guided by the following research questions:

- *In what ways do categories of external actors' influences affect national ICT policy formulation in developing countries?*
- *How do external and local actors engage with each other in a developing country in the policy formulation?*

Using secondary data sources from Malawi and Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, the paper seeks to provide new knowledge on the behaviour of actors in policy formulation and how such behaviour may be managed in future initiatives.

Malawi was chosen as the context of study because of calls for more ICT policy research in Africa (Gillwald, 2010; Thompson & Walsham, 2010) but also due to the country's numerous social challenges such as low literacy levels at 65.7% (UNESCO, 2016) and low incomes (World Bank, 2016), which may affect use and implementation of ICTs. In addition, Malawi is listed on position 170 of the 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2016 (UNDP, 2016). These challenges may force the country to easily accept conditions imposed by external actors during policy formulation.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides an outline of the study context. Section 3 reviews the literature of the study followed in Section 4 by a description of the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Section 5 discusses the research methodology that was adopted. Section 6 presents the findings whilst Section 7 discusses the results and also concludes the paper with contributions to theory and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A public policy is defined as “a set of decisions and activities resulting from the interaction between public and private actors, whose behaviour is influenced by the resources at their disposal, the general institutional rules (i.e. the rules concerning the overall functioning of the political system) and specific institutional rules (i.e the rules specific to the area of intervention under scrutiny)” (Knoepfel, Larrue, Varone, & Hill, 2007, p.113). This definition suggests that policy actors use resources and rules in the formulation of a public policy.

Public policy making process

There are different policy making models; these include the stages model, process model and systems theory (Birkland, 2015). The proponents of the stages model considered policy processes as a sequential or linear progression (Brewer, 1974). Policy making is considered ongoing and recurring, consisting of interactive and iterative policy making processes (see Figure 1). In the real world, there are different actors with different ideologies and complexities (Sabatier, 1991).

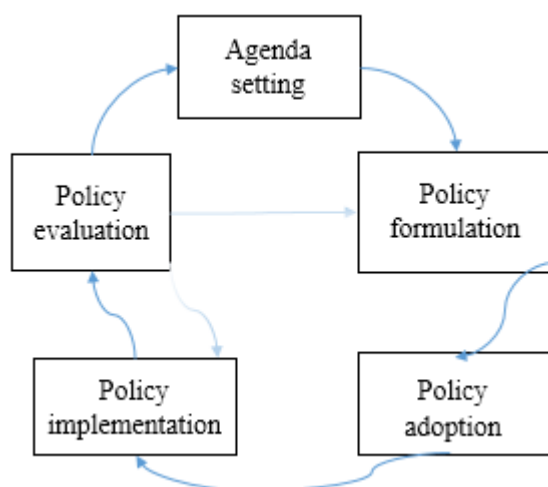


Figure 1: Stages model - policy making process (Lubua & Maharaj, 2012)

Almost all the models suggest that a public policy goes through some stages, which can be agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation and policy evaluation (Dye, 2013). In agenda setting, the problem or issue of concern is identified (Lubua & Maharaj, 2012). The stage also entails defining challenges and opportunities associated with the agenda. These may include (i) gathering evidence and knowledge from a range of stakeholders; (ii) understanding the context, including the political context for the agenda item; and (iii) developing a range of options.

In the next stage of policy formulation, policy objectives are evaluated for their effectiveness in addressing the policy challenges (Brown & Brown, 2008). The third stage culminates into a workable policy document, which is adopted (Macintosh, 2004). Among others, the stage involves: (i) formal consultation, (ii) risk analysis, (iii) undertaking pilot studies, and (iv) designing the implementation plan. The fourth stage considers issues of implementing the policy and may involve the development of legislation, regulation, guidance, and a delivery plan where appropriate legislations and regulations are put in place to support the implementation of formulated policies (Macintosh, 2004). The last stage encompasses evaluating the policy, which may involve a review of the policy in action, research evidence and views of users. After this stage, the process may re-start. It is also often acknowledged that at any stage the process may return to previous stages.

Actors in policy making

Public policies are the effort of a network of actors (Birkland, 2015). Policy actors can be classified in a variety of ways. Some classify actors based on whether they are visible or invisible (Moran, Rein, & Goodin, 2006); Birkland (2015) classifies them as official and unofficial actors. In this paper, a classification which groups the actors based on whether they are local or external (i.e *local actor and external actor*) during policy formulation as defined in Table 1 is adopted.

Category of Actor	Definitions	Examples of Actors
Local actors	Actors that play some role in policy making within a policy making boundary such as country through a policy network. These take part as nationals of a country	Private sector organisations, educational institutions, government ministries, departments and agencies including parastatal organisations, local non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, media organizations
External actors	Actors external (outside of a national boundary) to a policy making environment; but may influence or affect the formulation of policy within a policy network or from the background	World Bank, UN agencies, International Monetary Fund (IMF), UN agencies, IDRC, bilateral donors, USAID

Table 1: Classification of policy actors based on the position of the actors vis a vis the policy network (Chiumbu, 2008)

In normal circumstances, the government is the main actor in public policy making, even in situations where ideas come from other actors such as external and non-governmental actors (Birkland, 2015; Dye, 2013). Formulation of public policies in Africa attracts external actors. For example, in the form of international organisations, external actors have been visible or invisible in policy making activities in Africa (Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula, 2013).

ICT policy making in Africa

ICT policy making in Africa dates back to the 1990s. During a meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conferences of Ministers in 1995, a High-Level Working Group (HLWG) on ICTs was appointed to fast track issues of socio-economic development in Africa (Chiumbu, 2008). The HLWG came up with an action framework that was later called the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). The AISI created a framework for the development of national ICT policies and plans in African countries through the establishment of the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) framework (Adam & Gillwald, 2007). The process of developing the NICI policies and plans was funded by external actors, one of which was the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Subsequently, African countries started developing national ICT policies following the establishment of the AISI in 1996 (Adam & Gillwald, 2007; Metfula, 2013). Through the AISI, NICI plans were developed and used by 56% of the countries in formulating national ICT policies (Chiumbu, 2008).

Nearly 27% of the countries on the continent followed an incremental approach to policy formulation whilst an estimated 17% had not yet formulated ICT policies by 2006 (Adam & Gillwald, 2007). The incremental approach entailed formulating ICT policy with a focus on building blocks such as national

educational capacity, policy and regulation, infrastructure, content and public-sector service delivery (Adam, 2008). In addition to UNECA, other bilateral and multilateral donors such as the World Bank and IMF also played a role in advising countries to formulate national ICT policies as a way of joining the information society (Chiumbu, 2008).

Gaps in the literature

The review has exposed some forms of influences of external actors during formulation of national ICT policy in Africa, which can be summarised into:

- NICI framework
- Provision of financial support
- Provision of technical support
- Setting standards during the formulation of national ICT policies
- Setting of events.

For example, research that sought to understand the role and influence of external actors and ideas in African ICT policies in the case of the AISI found that trans-national business corporations were not directly involved in the establishment of the AISI (Chiumbu, 2008). The study found that bilateral / multilateral donors and UN agencies such as UNESCO, ITU and UNDP largely influenced the creation of the AISI. The AISI created the NICI framework, which became a model for formulating national ICT policies in Africa. Similarly, in the case of the Swaziland national ICT policy formulation, Metfula (2013) found that UNECA, a UN agency, and the Finnish government experts largely dominated the policy process although they were invisible actors. Swaziland used the NICI framework in addition to getting technical support and financial support from external actors such as UNECA and the Finnish government.

The review has also put to bare the external actors that had some material interests in the AISI, which are categorised as (a) bilateral and multilateral donors such as USAID, IDRC, the World Bank, DFID and the Government of Finland and (b) UN agencies such as UNESCO and the ITU (Chiumbu, 2008). Traditionally, these donors have been partners in providing financial and technical assistance to developing countries particularly in Africa (Etta & Elder, 2005). However, Chiumbu (2008) found that these donors played other roles in the formulation stages of the AISI. For example, the IDRC, ITU and UNESCO pressed for the holding of the Telematics for Development conference that gave rise to the emergence of the AISI in addition to getting directly involved in the selection of the HLWG members including offering policy advice to the group (Chiumbu, 2008, p.169). Furthermore, the study found that the trans-national business corporations played an indirect role in the operations of the AISI. For example, the first two AISI implementation meetings in 1996 and 1997 and the annual review and planning meetings were directed by these business corporations (Chiumbu, 2008). A study on the interplay between policy network actors and ICT policies found that the visibility of external actors in the Swaziland process affected some actors. For example, actors from the private sector pulled out of the policy process on account that their contributions were not needed following the dominance of the external actors in the policy formulation process (Metfula, 2013). Other studies show that formulation of national ICT policies in Africa was largely influenced by external actors with little or no involvement of local stakeholders (Adam & Gillwald, 2007; Odongo, 2012).

The studies appear to show some power imbalances between external actors and the local policy actors. This external influence appears to be negative as African countries are led into creating policies which are not compatible with local context and the actors' domination limits local participation in the policy

making processes. At the same time, African countries do not appear to have the capacity to formulate policies without the foreign assistance.

Scholars have explored influences of external actors on national ICT policy and classified them as direct and indirect influences (Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula, 2013). However, the review appears to suggest that there is a dearth of studies that have linked country context such as poverty levels, culture and other social dimensions to the technical and financial support that the external actors provide during formulation of public policies.

Past research has attempted to identify the effects of external actors' influence on policy formulation (Chiumbu, 2008; Etta & Elder, 2005, Metfula, 2013). Some of the studies used the policy network analysis (Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula, 2013) to analyse the interaction of actors within a policy network. The complexity of the relationships between the policy network and policy outcomes has been recorded, one of which is between the network and policy outcomes (Marsh & Smith, 2000). The review suggests that it was not the intention of the scholars (Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula (2013) to analyse the resulting policy outcomes in their work. Birkland (2015, p.229) defines a policy outcome as "the substantive results of the implementation of a policy. However, earlier research mainly focused on the formulation stage (Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula, 2013). An appropriate theory is thus required to analyse that relationship.

Past work on country context shows contradictory findings in the literature. One school of thought suggests that policy should be linked to country context (Adam & Gillwald, 2007; Kendall, Kendall, & Kah, 2006) whilst the other posits that there is no link between policy making and country context (Myers & Tan, 2002). Whilst past studies have suggested linking formulation of a policy with a country context (Adam & Gillwald, 2007; Njihia & Merali, 2013), not much has been done to follow up this recommendation. This calls for research that may consider empirical studies on the relationship between country context and formulation of a national ICT policy by asking that: how does the context of a developing country (economic, social, environmental, political) trigger unintended policy outcomes during formulation of a national ICT policy?

CONTEXT OF STUDY: MALAWI ICT POLICY

Country's historical and political perspectives

Malawi, a small country located in South East Africa, gained its independence from Great Britain in 1964 (Morton, 2011). (see Table 2).

Name of president	From	To	Political Party
Hastings Kamuzu Banda	1964	1994	MCP
Bakili Muluzi	1994	2004	UDF
Bingu Mutharika	2004	2012	DPP
Joyce Banda	2012	2014	PP
Peter Mutharika	2014	to the present	DPP

Table 2: Chronology of Malawi Leaders and their political parties

Demographic profile of Malawi

With an estimated population of 17.7 million, Malawi has a population growth rate estimated at 2.9%, which is higher than countries such as Botswana at 1.8%, Ghana at 2.2% and South Africa at 1.6% (World Bank,

2016). This high rate may hinder development, including provision of services such as telecommunications, as it creates pressure on government resources. Of the current population, only 6.1% has access to the Internet (ITU, 2016) and an estimated 85% of the population lives in rural areas (NSO, 2016) where power supply is inadequate and telecommunications infrastructure is weak (Dzidonu, 2002). Other challenges include: low literacy levels at 65.4% (UNESCO, 2016), low incomes (World Bank, 2016), low HDI and high poverty rate of 69.6% (World Bank, 2016). On the HDI, Malawi was listed on position 170 of the 188 countries in 2016 (UNDP, 2016). Low literacy and HDI levels may reveal why ICTs have been seen merely as tools for computer applications such as word processing and spreadsheet manipulation (Kanjo & Mtema, 2003).

Poverty levels are high in the country with over 90% of the population living on less than US\$2 a day (World Bank, 2015) and 40% of the national budget is financed by donor aid (Wroe, 2012). Table 3 summarises the demographic profile of Malawi.

Narrative	Value	Source
Population	17.7 million	World Bank, 2015
Rural population	85%	NSO, 2016
Literacy	65.7%	UNESCO, 2016
Human development index	170 out of 188 countries	UNDP, 2016
Poverty rate	69.6%	World Bank, 2016
Donor dependency	40% of annual national budget	Wroe, 2012
Economy	> 90% of population lives on less than US\$2/day	World Bank, 2015
Corruption rank	120 out of 175 countries; 31 out of 100	TI, 2017
Access to the Internet	6.5%	ITU, 2016

Table 3: Malawi Country Profile

There are mixed observations on the effect of external aid to developing countries. One view is that aid has a positive impact on economic growth as it increases investment, the capacity to import capital goods or technology. At some point this appears to be true for Malawi because despite its over-dependence on aid, the country experienced rapid growth between 2004 and 2010 when the economy grew at an average of 7% (Wroe, 2012). Another view is that foreign aid is significantly and negatively correlated with economic growth in which correlation, in turn, is caused by factors such as aid dependency, bad economic management and corruption and poor coordination (Minh, 2006; Winters & Martinez, 2015). Malawi also appears to lean towards the negative effects of aid as the country largely depends on foreign aid for its annual budget (Wroe, 2012). In addition, corruption levels are high and there is evidence of poor management of funds in the country (TI, 2017), which is in tandem with the second view on the effects of external aid.

The demographics in Table 3 may affect access and usage of ICTs in the country, which are outcomes of a national ICT policy (Marcelle, 2000; Odongo, 2012). Thus, studying influences of external actors in the formulation of a national ICT policy may inform government and other stakeholders of public policy in Malawi and similar countries on how external actors should be managed.

Malawi public policy making process

The public policy making process in Malawi adopts the standard approach described earlier. This process starts with identification of an issue, followed by the development of a concept paper that would address the problem. Next, stakeholder consultations are held and this stage is followed by formulation of the policy document, which is reviewed by cabinet. Once approved by cabinet, the policy is ready for implementation beyond which issues of evaluation arise (Makoza, 2017).

The first activities to developing a national ICT policy can be traced back to the year 2001. At this time, policy actors undertook a pre-policy survey (Kanjjo & Mtema, 2003), produced pre-policy reports (Mbvundula, 2003), attended policy preparatory meetings (ITTF, 2001; ITTF, 2001b) but also participated in Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) events on ICT policy (COMESA, 2004). Malawi had a dedicated national ICT policy by 2007 that included the promotion of ICTs in education and other related areas such as information services and networks (Shafika, 2007).

Malawi drafted three versions of the national ICT policy (Makoza & Chigona, 2012). The first draft was released in 2003 with support from the AISI and UNECA. The policy, which was developed using the blueprint from NICI, identified four areas as (i) youth and development, (ii) health, (iii) business and commerce and (iv) ICT policy and regulations (Makoza & Chigona, 2012). This policy was later revised in 2006 to address some socio-economic development challenges the country was facing. The final draft of the national ICT policy, released in 2009, was officially launched with minor changes in 2013 when Joyce Banda was the president (Malawi Government, 2016) (see summary in Table 4).

Date of release	Policy document	Description	President
June 2003	Malawi Information and Communication (ICT) Policy	First national ICT Policy document released in June, 2003	Bakili Muluzi
July 2006	Malawi National ICT for Development (ICT4D) Policy	Second national ICT Policy document	Bingu wa Mutharika
February 2009	National ICT Policy: An ICT-led Malawi	Third national ICT Policy document	Bingu wa Mutharika

Table 4: Summary of draft versions of ICT policies in Malawi (Makoza & Chigona, 2013)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories in public policy studies

Research on public policy has used Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), Actor-Network Theory (ANT), Policy Network Analysis (PNA) and Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (ToP) to analyse public policy processes in different contexts. For example, scholars have used ACF in public policy studies to understand policy processes such as policy change (Kubler, 2001; Weible, 2007). Other studies have adopted PNA to analyse the interaction of policy actors in policy networks (Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula, 2013). Yet others have used ANT to understand public policy processes including the interaction of network actors during policy making (Rutland & Aylett, 2008). Indeed, there are many theories that can be used to study power relations and how the power relations affect policy formulation. Examples of the areas of application of the theoretical frameworks are in Table 5.

Network theories such as ACF, ANT and PNA are useful in three dialectical relationships between structure and agency; network and context; and network and outcome (Marsh & Smith, 2000, p. 5). This study focused on the consequences or effects of the external actors' influence during policy formulation other than the

network of actors and context or outcomes. Therefore, the network theories, in this case, were not deemed suitable lens for the study.

Theory	Examples of application arenas
Bourdieu's theory of practice	Education, social studies, environment, entrepreneurship, health, information systems
Actor-network theory	Policy, information systems
Policy network analysis	Public policy

Table 5: Focus of theoretical frameworks

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice was the theoretical underpinning of the study. The theory focuses on aspects of domination and relative strength of agents (actors) within society (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu understood domination in social space (field) as primarily being prompted by unequal allocation of resources (Walther, 2013). For example, in a study on higher education, and its role in the reproduction of class relations, Bourdieu was concerned with class struggle especially "conflicts within the dominant class-between sectors rich in, respectively, economic and cultural capital" (DiMaggio, 1979, p.1465). Other examples of research that has adopted ToP are listed in Table 6.

Author(s)/Year	Research title
Collyer, Willis, Franklin, Harley, & Short, 2015	Healthcare choice: Bourdieu's capital, habitus and field
Gunter & Forrester, 2009	School leadership and education policy-making in England
Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009	Education Policy as a Practice of Power: Theoretical Tools, Ethnographic Methods, Democratic Options
Lingard, Rawolle, & Taylor, 2005	Globalizing policy sociology in education: working with Bourdieu
Lingard, Sellar, & Baroutsis, 2015	Researching the habitus of global policy actors in education

Table 6: A summary of studies that have used Bourdieu's theory of practice

Bourdieu's theory provides a multi-layered perspective to theory in which individuals are conceptualised as producers of social practices in social space as they follow specific practices (Grenfell & Lebaron, 2014). The concepts of field, habitus, capital and practice (see Table 7) are used to explain interactions of agents within the social world (Bourdieu, 1986). This is in tandem with the objective of this study, which is to explore how influences of external actors affect formulation of a national ICT policy in a developing country context in which local and external actors interact. In this theory, agents use their individual forms of capital such as economic, cultural and social in the specific fields and reconciliation of both objectivity and subjectivity of issues in a social group happens through the theory (Grenfell & Lebaron, 2014). Capital refers to the different forms of resources that actors bring to the field (policy formulation) where social interactions take place (Collyer, Willis, Franklin, Harley, & Short, 2015). Bourdieu posits that agents are distributed in the social space based on: the volume of capital they possess, the composition of their capital relative to the other forms of capital particularly economic and cultural and the evolution in time of the volume and composition of capital (Bourdieu, 1987). An agent is defined in the study as an individual, group of persons, organisation or donor who acts (or has the

power to act) in a field such as national ICT policy formulation. Bourdieu explicates that one common social space in a field is the field of power (Grenfell, 2008).

Concept	Definition	Examples
Field	Domain of activity within which actors engage and compete with one another to achieve their objectives	An area of land, a battle field, a field of knowledge, national ICT policy, country context
Practice	A process by which the agents can experience the world and their engagement with it as meaningful	Behaviour in a meeting, Giving financial resources
Habitus	A set of dispositions that incline agents to act and react in certain ways.	National pride, Cultures, Political background
Capital	A range of resources that can be applied to given activities	Cultural: education, experience, mannerism Economic: material and monetary assets Symbolic: honour, title

Table 7: Concepts of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu conceptualises field as a network of relations with a specific distribution of power (Grenfell & Lebaron, 2014). Bourdieu argued that interactions between people or an explanation of an event or social phenomenon can be understood or theorised by examining the social space (policy formulation) in which interactions, transactions and events occurred (Bourdieu, 2005). Within the field are social positions, which are structured in terms of power relations. For example, the power differences between local actors and external actors in the formulation of a national ICT policy.

The Malawi national ICT policy formulation was the field of study in which preferences, attitudes and expressions (habitus) of the local and external actors were identified. Within the field, positions of actors (dominating or dominated) pointed to the influences of the actors. These influences were determined through the amount of capital (economic, social, symbolic and cultural) relevant to the field that the actors possessed.

Despite its wide use, the Theory of Practice has been criticised by some researchers such as Grenfell (2008) and Mutch (2006). Grenfell (2008, p.78) argues that the field theory does not clearly show “where to draw the line, that is, how to find out where the field effects stop”. This is associated with field boundary. For example, assuming that every organisation in a country has an education programme, where would the field of education end?

The second problem relates to the number of fields. Bourdieu views field as consisting of “four semi-autonomous levels: the field of power, the broad field under consideration, the specific field, and social agents in the field as a field in themselves” (Grenfell, 2008, p.79). For example, analysis of policy formulation might mean considering the field of power, the field of public policy, the national ICT policy field, country context as semi-autonomous fields. This implies that in order to analyse the national ICT policy field, a researcher also has to analyse the other fields. However, as a solution to this challenge, Bourdieu himself suggests reducing the number of fields at play by primarily focusing on the discipline specific field (Grenfell, 2008).

Thirdly, there is the problem of change in the field. Bourdieu (cited in Grenfell, 2008, p. 79) theorised “fields as antagonistic, as sites of struggle. The game that is played in fields has no ultimate winner, it is an unending game, and this always implies the potential for change at any time”. In order to understand

the existing form, Bourdieu stresses analysis of the way the field develops by showing how changes in the field take place over time (Grenfell, 2008; Mutch, 2006).

A fourth limitation is that the theoretical framework appears “a little dense and complex at the outset and needs careful explanation”. However, the relational aspects help address the issue of complexity once it has been understood (Mutch, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Approach

Using document analysis as the major research method, this qualitative study identified local actors and external actors as the policy actors that took part in the formulation of the Malawi national ICT policy as the field. Influences of the policy actors were revealed at two levels in the formulation of the national ICT policy in Malawi. The first level was exposed through policy activities such as providing technical and financial support, arranging WSIS meetings, among others, while the second level was identified through meetings of the actors. The paper, which is part of a bigger study, has only used documents because other parts of the study deal with interviews of policy actors. Although document analysis is mostly used to complement other research methods, it can also be used “as a stand-alone method” in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009, p.29). Since this study adopted a critical stance, the researcher used document analysis to gain an insight before engaging in critical analysis. Indeed, Myers & Klein (2011) suggest that the first element in critical research is to gain an insight into the context prior to engaging in critical analysis.

Document analysis is applicable to qualitative case studies in which the researcher seeks to gain “rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organisation, or program” (Bowen, 2009, p.29). The method entails finding, selecting, appraising and synthesizing data (or text) that are contained in documents, which in turn yield other data in a form of “excerpts, quotations, or entire passages—that are then organised into major themes, categories, and case examples specifically through content analysis” (Bowen, 2009, p.28). The procedure proposed by Bowen (2009) entails going through four steps of finding, selecting, appraising and synthesising documents although the same article suggests documenting as an element worth considering. This study modified the procedure proposed by Bowen (2009) by including ‘documenting’, which culminated into this report, as another step.

Data sources and analysis

Sources of data for this research were:

- three draft policy documents of 2003, 2006 and 2009,
- three copies of minutes of meetings of policy actors, and
- four reports from policy activities (see Table 8).

Documents are a critical source of data to a researcher because they leave a record of events and processes (Lindlof & Bryan, 2010). Since the research context is historical in nature, document analysis was also found to be a reliable source of data (Bowen, 2009). Minutes of policy activities were collected from eGovernment Department under the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology whilst the reports and policy documents were obtained from websites. A number of gaps between minutes of meetings of policy actors were noted. This problem was partly solved through contacting some individuals who made a few additional copies of minutes available.

Data analysis applied the policy model through the stages of agenda setting and policy formulation. These stages were chosen on the basis that external actors' influence was situated in agenda setting (Chiumbu, 2008) and policy formulation (Adam & Gillwald, 2007; Chiumbu, 2008; Metfula, 2013).

Identification	Document	Title/description
ICT2003	Malawi Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy	First national ICT Policy document released in June, 2003
ICT2006	Malawi National ICT for Development (ICT4D) Policy	Second national ICT Policy document released in July, 2006
ICT2009	National ICT Policy: An ICT-led Malawi	Third national ICT Policy document released in February, 2009
MRPT1	Pre-policy survey report	Role of ICT in Poverty Reduction at national and district levels in Malawi: final report
MRPT2	Report on country-wide consultations	Report on Country-wide Consultations for An Integrated Socio--Economic and ICT Policy and Plan Development Framework for Malawi
MRPT3	Report on country-wide consultant by consultant	An Integrated Socio-Economic and ICT Policy and Plan Development Framework for Malawi
NICTWG	Report of a national ICT working group meeting	Report of the National Information and Communication Technology Working Group (NICTWG) 1st Meeting
ITTF1	Minutes of task force meeting	Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Information Technology Task Force held on 18 January, 2001
ITTF2	Minutes of task force meeting	Minutes of the Third Meeting of Information Technology Task Force held on 25 July, 2001
COM1	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) meeting on regional ICT policy	The Development of a Regional ICT Strategy for COMESA: Terms of Reference for Consultant

Table 8: Secondary data sources on policy formulation in Malawi

Stake (1995) identifies case studies in qualitative research as falling into three types, which are intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. An intrinsic case study is used when the main interest is the case itself. The purpose in this instance is not theory building. In an intrinsic case, the idea is not to learn about other cases but rather that the researcher needs to learn or has special interest about that single case. An instrumental case study is one in which a particular case is examined to provide insight into a problem and in this situation the case is used as a tool or instrument to accomplish something other than understanding this particular case. This approach helps in the refinement of theory (Stake, 1995). Either an intrinsic or instrumental case study can be a collective case study (Stake, 1995).

There are different cases of generalisability. Case studies can be used to generalise to theory (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) as well as generalising to population (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Generally, the goal in quantitative research is to obtain large, representative samples and to generalize findings to populations (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Some scholars posit that one cannot generalise on the basis of a single case (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) whilst others argue that a single case can be used to achieve generalisability. For example, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that choice of a case, not necessarily the number of cases, is central in case study research and can be used to generalise to theory. Walsham (1995b) cited in Lee & Baskerville (2003, p.236) elucidates that with a "rich description of a case, the researcher can generalise to concepts, to a theory, to specific implications, or to rich insight. All four of Walsham's examples involve generalising from empirical statements (reflecting the observations made in a case study) to theoretical statements (concepts, theory, specific implications, and rich insight)". This study adopted the understanding of generalisation to theory based on Walsham's (1995b) citation and used a single case study.

RESULTS

Policy actors

Both local and external actors took part in some activities leading to formulation of the Malawi national ICT policy as listed in Table 9.

Local actors

Local actors took an active role in pre-policy activities such as conducting a survey of usage of computer resources at district and national levels (Kanjo & Mtema, 2003) and a situation analysis on country-wide consultations on issues pertaining to national ICT policy (Mbvundula, 2003). Local actors were committed to have a national ICT policy in place. For instance, the local actors set up an Information Technology Task Force (ITTF) that developed a work plan for a pending consultancy relating to the policy formulation activity such as:

"...The Chairman ... outlined the objectives of the meeting as to discuss the work plan for the Information Technology task force, and to agree on Terms of Reference for a consultant who is expected to draft the IT Policy and coordinate the drafting of IT legislation" (ITTF, 2001, p.1).

Local actors also participated in surveys that may have led to the formulation of the policy (Kanjo & Mtema, 2003; Mbvundula, 2003). This seems to suggest that the local actors actively participated in policy formulation activities. However, the local actors appear to hold that the activity could only be carried out through an external expert. Local actors were of the view that the task of developing a national ICT policy could only be achieved through a consultancy as in the minutes:

"...The Chairman ... outlined the objectives of the meeting as to ... agree on Terms of Reference for a consultant who is expected to draft the IT Policy and coordinate the drafting of IT legislation" (ITTF, 2001, p.1).

The habitus of the local actors was exposed through their expressions and preferences. For example, expression and preference to engage a consultant:

"...conversant with regional (SADC, COMESA, Preferential Trade Area (PTA)) efforts on Science and Technology in general and on IT in particular" (ITTF, 2001, p.7).

Habitus is used to explain how people act and think in a social context (Bourdieu, 1993). The local actors already felt dominated by external actors in the policy formulation field.

The findings also suggest that the local actors did not have the will to formulate the policies in the first place. There is no evidence that shows that prior to the activities of the external actors, there were efforts to come up with a policy. The recruitment of consultants to provide a framework and develop a policy clearly shows that the perception (habitus) of the local actors was that the local actors did not have skills (cultural capital) to develop the policy on their own. Skills are incorporated in the habitus (Bourdieu, 2005). This is supported by an observation that government made on challenges one of which was that the country lacked skills to formulate an ICT policy (ICT2003, 2003).

Minutes of meetings show that external actors played a major role in providing both technical and financial support during the formulation of the national ICT policy in Malawi. However, it is not clear in the minutes whether the external actors participated in the proceedings of the meetings. For example, COMESA provided funding for the local actors to attend meetings within the region. COMESA, UNECA and UNDP funded local meetings of the ITTF (ITTF, 2001; ITTF, 2001b) but the minutes do not show their direct involvement. This indirect involvement has been identified as indirect influence in earlier studies (Chiumbu, 2008; Kunyenje & Chigona, 2017; Metfula, 2013).

Category	Policy actor	Sector	Role played
Local	Department of Information Systems and Technology Management Services (DISTMS)	Public	Secretariat, chairperson
	Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA)	Public	Member
	Ministry of Information and Tourism	Public	Member
	Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security	Public	Member
	Bumas International	Private	Member
	Economic Planning & Development Department	Public	Member
	Office of the President and Cabinet	Public	Member
	Limbe Leaf Tobacco Limited	Private	Member
	Malawi Telecommunications Limited	Public	Vice Chairperson
	University of Malawi	Public	Chairperson
External	UNECA		Funding, Advisory
	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)		Funding, Advisory
	COMESA		Funding, Advisory
	World Bank		Advisory

Table 9: Policy actors during policy making process in Malawi

In the first draft policy, which adopted the NICI framework, Malawi commits to establishing a coordination body to assist in implementing the policy as stated in the next statement “...to support implementation of this policy, there shall be a national ICT coordination body and ICT legislation” (ICT2003, p.3). However, 10 years after this commitment the body has not yet been created and the ICT legislation is not yet drafted.

The draft policy documents also identify challenges Malawi is facing such as:

“inadequate resources including human, financial, material, technological and capacity to train personnel; poor allocation and utilization of available resources; over-dependence on donor aid; and high cost structures in the economy including transport, telecommunications and electricity” (ICT2006, p.7; ICT2009, p.7).

Within the same draft policies, donor funding is mentioned as a strategy for implementing the policy. For example, the government will “...encourage donor agencies, non-government organizations and other development partners of the country to help in ICT capacity building initiatives” (ICT2006, p.31).

The policy also states that “...the donors and international agencies will assist in funding ICT initiatives, training and education. They will also offer technical support” (ICT2006, p.37). This suggests that without donor funding, the policy actions may not be achieved. Donor-dependence syndrome continues affecting negatively on policy outcomes (Wroe, 2012). This appears to support the challenges Malawi faces based on the demographics provided in Table 3. With this over-dependence on foreign aid and the high levels of corruption, Malawi may be enslaved through continued dependence on external actors (*practice*).

External actors

External actors such as UNDP, UNECA and COMESA participated in policy activities during the policy formulation stage. For example, the pre-policy survey that was undertaken prior to the formulation of the national ICT policy was funded by UNDP (Kanjo & Mtema, 2003). External actors played a role in

some pre-policy formulation activities. UNECA and UNDP jointly funded (economic capital) work in preparation for a pre-policy framework that adopted the NICI plan. This activity culminated in a report part of which stated that:

“...While the Government recognized the role that ICTs could play in the developmental process, there is currently no comprehensive government policy or plan in this area. Also past national economic development plans did not incorporate aspects of ICT developmental plans or programmes” (Dzidonu, 2002b, p.47).

Within the same period, UNDP provided funding for a survey to identify the situation of computers and usage of ICTs at national and district levels across Malawi (Kanjjo & Mtema, 2003). The report highlighted how computers were mostly being used across Malawi.

In another activity, UNDP funded a local firm in Malawi to conduct a pre-policy survey whose report revealed that

“...The Malawi National ICT Policy Framework document outlines the SUNRISE model for the development and implementation of National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) plans. The SUNRISE model forms part of the UNECA methodology for guiding the development of national ICT plans and provides a framework for identifying and guiding the implementation of suitable programmes, projects and initiatives that could be incorporated into the NICI Plans” (Mbvundula, 2003, p.2).

These findings suggest that the external actors dominated in the policy field through provision of resources and expertise (capital). Table 10 summarises the activities that were championed by external actors.

External actors' financial and technical support (capitals) directly influenced the policy formulation in Malawi. Using their capitals, external actors influenced and thus dominated local actors in Malawi during policy formulation.

Activity	Title of Report	Authors & Year	Funding Institutions
Pre-policy survey on the computer situation in Malawi	Role of ICT in Poverty Reduction at national and district levels in Malawi: final report	Kanjjo, C. & Mtema, P., 2003	UNDP
Framework for developing a national ICT policy	An Integrated Socio-Economic and ICT Policy	Dzidonu, C., 2002	UNECA & UNDP
National ICT Policy Framework Consultations	Report on Country-wide Consultations for An Integrated Socio--Economic and ICT	Mbvundula, T., 2003	UNDP
e-Readiness assessment on Malawi	The Southern Africa Capacity Initiative e-Readiness Assessment on Malawi		UNDP
Africa e-Readiness Assessment for New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)	Africa e-Readiness Assessment for NEPAD: An Analysis of Selected African Countries	PSTG, 2006	NEPAD

Table 10: A summary of activities funded by external actors

Categories of external actors' influences

The data shows the influences of external actors as taking a number of forms (see Table 11). The forms of external actors' influences fall into:

- Development of policy framework (NICI framework, regional framework within COMESA);
- Provision of financial support;
- Provision of technical support;
- Signing of regional protocols;
- Setting of events such as the WSIS conference;
- Policy ideas.

Category	Policy actor	Category of influence
Local	DISTMS	Funding, policy ideas
	MACRA	Funding, policy ideas
	Ministry of Information and Tourism	Policy ideas
	Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security	Policy ideas
	Bumas International	Policy ideas
	Economic Planning & Development Department	Policy ideas
	Office of the President and Cabinet	Policy ideas
	Limbe Leaf Tobacco Limited	Policy ideas
	Malawi Telecommunications Limited	Policy ideas
	University of Malawi	Policy ideas
External	UNECA	NICI framework, funding, technical support, policy ideas
	UNDP	Funding, technical support
	COMESA	Funding, policy ideas, technical support, regional protocols
	World Bank	Policy ideas

Table 11: Categories of influences of policy actors

Influences of external actors

Malawi adopted the NICI framework during the formulation of its national ICT policy (Adam & Gillwald, 2007), which is a template that was developed through UNECA (Chiumbu, 2008), an external actor. The first draft of the policy, which adopted the NICI framework, was facilitated by an external actor (Dzidonu, 2002b). This confirms earlier views by the local actors that Malawi lacks skills in policy development (ICT2003, 2003). The finding also reveals the expressions (habitus) of the actors as preferring external consultancy (ITTF, 2001). Although different stakeholders were consulted during the policy process, the findings reveal that the process had external influence (domination) through development of a set of guidelines that were said to be ‘best practice’ (ITTF, 2001b). In other words, the local actors were influenced (dominated) by the external actor’s recommendation for best practice (policy ideas). Through this type of influence, local actors adopted the policy ideas from an external actor as in “...he had worked on similar projects for several countries” (ITTF, 2001b, p.2). The external actor prompted the local actors to adopt the policy ideas from similar assignments as best practice.

Although countries were at different levels in the formulation of national ICT policies (Adam & Gillwald, 2007), COMESA member states adopted a framework at regional level for developing ICT

policy and associated Bill at country level (COMESA, 2004). The COMESA e-Strategy was implemented under the backings of the AISI, which was influenced by UNECA – an external actor. The findings further show that the AISI funded (economic capital) the initiatives. This implies that COMESA induced the countries within its region to adopt a framework due to availability of funding, which is some form of domination in the field of ICT policy formulation.

WSIS plan of action influenced the formulation of the Malawi national ICT policy. For example, during one of the planning meetings local actors acknowledged the alignment of the policy with WSIS action plan as in:

“...the draft Malawi National ICT4D Policy and that this Plan of action should be in line with the Malawi Vision 2020, Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) and the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) plan of action” (NICTWG, 2006, p.4).

Metfula (2013) found that Swaziland policy formulation was influenced by events of the WSIS conferences. This is similar to what happened in Malawi in the formulation of the national ICT policy. The Malawi national ICT policy was also aligned with the WSIS action plan. For example, the Chairman of the National Information and Communication Technology Working Group (NICTWG) urged *“the working group to start planning for the Plan of Action instead of waiting for the approval of the draft Malawi National ICT4D Policy and that this Plan of action should be in line with ... the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) plan of action”* (NICTWG, 2006, p.4). this was some form of external influence.

External actors' influences are also observed through policy ideas. During one of the ITTF meetings, a UNECA-appointed consultant presented a draft ICT policy framework paper over which local actors expressed concern with regard to: incompleteness of the document, sustainability challenges, championing of the policy implementation, among others. In response, the consultant informed the actors: *“...that he had worked on similar projects for several countries”* (ITTF, 2001b, p.2).

The consultant then suggested a process to be followed in formulating the policy as: *“...carry out serious analysis; conduct workshops to identify key cross-cutting areas; baseline study by the consultant; lobby for the higher-level authorities to support the efforts; involve media; sensitise the public; legislate the policy”* (ITTF, 2001b, p.2). This suggests that ideas from an external actor are more superior compared to those from local actors.

Policy ideas from regional blocks (external actors) also played a part during the Malawi national ICT policy formulation. For example, part of the draft terms of reference for the consultant that was hired included a clause on exposure as in *“...be conversant with regional (SADC, COMESA, PTA) efforts on Science and Technology in general and on IT in particular”* (ITTF, 2001, p.7). The ideas from Southern African Development Community (SADC), COMESA and Preferential Trade Area (PTA) influenced the way the policy was formulated.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

External actors' influences have been identified as being dominant in the formulation of the national ICT policy (field) in Malawi. This paper set out to:

- Identify ways in which categories of external actors' influences affect formulation of a national ICT policy in developing countries;

- Investigate how external and local actors engage with each other in a developing country during policy formulation.

Influences of external actors

Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, capital and practice were at play during the formulation of the national ICT policy in Malawi. Field is conceptualised as a configuration or a network of relations with a specific distribution of power (Grenfell & Lebaron, 2014).

Firstly, the results appear to suggest that local actors were committed to developing a national ICT policy (*field*) at country level. This is demonstrated through the various initiatives, activities and meetings that were undertaken during the policy process. External actors provided platforms (dominated), for example, through hosting of conferences such as the WSIS, a framework for developing the policies, policy ideas, financial and technical support for the development of the national ICT policies (see Table 11). The results suggest that use of the policy framework (blueprint) may not have had a positive effect on the national ICT policy outcomes in Malawi.

The policy process started with the NICI plan but over time, the versions of the policy changed in content with some of the objectives in the first draft policy being omitted in the second and third. Objectives changed from commitments in the first policy draft to themes in the second and third drafts (Makoza & Chigona, 2013). Although the policy process started in 2001 using the NICI plan, the resultant policy was only launched in 2013, which may suggest that matters of national ICT policy formulation are given little attention. Simply put, without external actors there is no ICT policy in Malawi.

Although they initially showed commitment to the ICT policy process, local actors appear to have been dominated by external actors in the field of national ICT policy formulation through provision of both financial and technical support. This appears to support earlier research that developing countries are dominated by inadequate financial and human resources and issues of dependency on foreign institutions (Brown & Thompson, 2011). Malawi's aid profile together with the other challenges (see Table 3) may also have provided an opportunity to external actors to dominate in the field of national ICT policy formulation.

Further, although Malawi tried to align its national ICT policy with the WSIS action plan, it is unlikely that the plan was fully compatible with the country's needs. Some challenges African countries faced on forums such as the WSIS show that the numbers of the representatives were inadequate to "...influence the agenda, put views forward, implement decisions and evaluate the outcomes taking domestic challenges into the account" Adam & Gillwald (2007, p.19). This suggests that Malawi was ready to adopt an action plan, which may have been largely dominated by external strategies.

Secondly, financial and technical support (*capital*) appear to have affected the formulation of the policy. The local actors through the policy documents confirmed that the country cannot do without donors in both financial and technical support. The local actors' *habitus* in the *field* of Malawi ICT policy formulation appears to suggest that policy outcomes may be realised with support from external actors. This confirms Malawi's donor-aid dependence syndrome (*practice*). Without donor aid, the study seems to suggest that there is no policy in Malawi. This is an admission that the local actors accept being dominated by external actors in the formulation of the national ICT policy.

Thirdly, the NICI framework, which was the basis for formulating the first draft national ICT policy greatly affected the outcomes of the policy. Whilst the framework recommended establishment of a

coordinating body and legislation, the recommendation has not yet been implemented. This seems to suggest that the adoption of the NICI framework may have negatively affected the resulting policy.

Interaction of actors

Despite the efforts from external actors, Malawi, for example, took more than 10 years to have its national ICT policy in place. In addition, there is no evidence that shows that the national ICT policy outcomes are being achieved. For instance, Malawi has been declining on the digital divide index since 2010 (ITU, 2016). This may mean that the national ICT policy outcomes are not being achieved.

The results seem to further suggest that without the external actors' influence, there would be no national ICT policy in Malawi. This notion equally applies to the region (COMESA, 2004). This agrees with earlier research on the Swaziland policy formulation process in which local actors were dependent on donor support (Metfula, 2013).

The study identifies the NICI policy framework, financial support, technical support, attending WSIS conferences, signing of regional/international protocols and external policy ideas on policy as categories of influences that may have affected the national ICT policy formulation in Malawi.

This paper examined influences of external actors in the formulation of a national ICT policy in the context of a developing country. Countries in Africa have been developing national ICT policies mostly since the early 2000s. However, unintended policy outcomes continue to take center stage. For example, the majority of the countries continue to feature poorly on the ICT rankings. The study agrees with the notion that country context does not have an effect on policy formulation (Myers & Tan, 2002). The paper further finds that developing countries cannot do without the influences of external actors during formulation of national ICT policies. For example, COMESA created a framework for developing national ICT policies amongst its member states because funds were readily available through UNECA (COMESA, 2004). Based on these findings, managers and stakeholders of public policy may wish to seek ways of how they can effectively manage external actors during the policy process.

These findings are in line with Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, which offers a multi-layered view to theory in which agents are conceptualised as producers of social practices in a social environment as they follow specific practices (Bourdieu, 1977). Interactions of the agents (policy actors) within the social world are explained through the concepts of (i) field, (ii) habitus, (iii) capital and (iv) practice (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu understood domination and relative strength of agents as primarily being prompted by unequal allocation of resources (Bourdieu, 1977; Walther, 2013). Through his theory, Bourdieu argues that interactions between people, an event or social phenomenon can be understood or explained by examining the social space (policy formulation) in which interactions, transactions and events occurred, and domination is the result of accumulation of different capitals (financial and technical support) (Grenfell, 2008). This paper has demonstrated how local actors were dominated by external actors following the capitals the external actors presented in the formulation of the national ICT policy. The major limitation in the study was that, with the passage of time, most documents from government were unavailable considering that the policy processes took place as early as 2001. This was partly addressed by searching for documents through the government website.

A study may be carried out in future to explore how countries such as Malawi are lagging behind on the ICT development index compared to others that are subjected to similar forms of external actors' influence.

This paper has connected theory and empirical evidence on the influences of external actors during the policy process. Through local actors' habitus (expressions, preferences), capital in a form of financial

and technical support during the formulation of a national ICT policy and practice, the paper has validated how local actors are dominated by influences of external actors. This paper has demonstrated influences of external actors in the formulation of public policies especially in developing countries. As such governments, policy makers and implementers should identify ways of managing the external actors during the different categories of influences.

Beware, especially when using this template on a Macintosh, Word may change these dimensions in unexpected ways.

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