

Relating Autonomy and Capacity to Higher Education Governance in Malawi

*A Case study on the University of Malawi,
College of Medicine Reforms*

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Supervisor: Professor Peter Maassen



**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for
the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Higher Education**

Faculty of Educational Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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Abstract

The global perspective of governance in higher education is changing with the adoption of New Public Management (NPM) ideas. These ideas entail implementing private sector styles of management in the view that the results will produce more effective and efficient services in the area of higher education. In Malawi we see reforms taking place reflecting these ideas in the University of Malawi (UNIMA) with the delinking of colleges from the University as a key reform component. These reforms suggest that the colleges have reached a capacity to be stand-alone universities.

The aim of this study was to understand the reforms in the UNIMA and how they relate to theories on public governance reforms. To do this an analytical framework inspired by Fukuyama which focuses on the relationship between autonomy and capacity to understand the quality of governance was used. The College of Medicine (COM) was selected as a case study among the four colleges of UNIMA and data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

The findings of the study show that the reforms aimed at COM were influenced by reforms taking place in UNIMA which were in turn influenced by general public-sector governance reforms. However, the feeling from the COM was that a limit in autonomy has stifled implementation of policies, innovation on other ways of being effective and efficient, and capacity building. This had to be seen in relation to the expectation beforehand that the delinking process would propel COM into having a better, more effective governance system. The limited autonomy seemed to result in underutilizing the increase in capacity within COM and as such delinking was seen as a key reform to resolve this situation. The optimism is admired but the extent to which this expectation could be realized in practice was not clearly highlighted before the implementation of the reforms and only after the delinking could a further research be conducted to see how these expectations were met.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to;

My late father Dr. Peter John Lino

My mother Mazganga Lino

My Children Kendra and Tumaini

I owe it all to you

Acknowledgement

The journey to the attainment of an MPhil has been long and stressful and I am truly grateful for the support that these persons have provided me in their own way. I would like to acknowledge your contribution and give my heartfelt gratitude for never giving up on me.

First and foremost, my supervisor Professor Peter Maassen who has believed in me from the first day I step foot in the classroom. I appreciate the support, advice, patience and experiences shared. It is my hope that the contents of this study will be of great contribution to your continuous effort to improve higher education in Sub Saharan Africa.

I would like to acknowledge my sponsor, the College of Medicine in Malawi, for allowing me this rare opportunity to study with a prestigious university in Norway. I am forever indebted to you and the favor you have shown me.

Let me also take the time to thank my friends, family and colleagues who were there through all the struggles and hurdles. You pushed me when I could not go on and I owe it all to your encouragement and prayers.

List of Abbreviations;

AR-HR	Assistant Registrar Human Resource
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COM	College of Medicine
ESPR	Education Sector Progress Report
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KCN	Kamuzu College of Nursing
LUANAR	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
MIM	Malawi Institute of Management
MMed	Master of Medicine
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MDGs	Millennium Development Strategic Goals
NCHE	National Council of Higher Education
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSRCR	Public Sector Reform Commission Report
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RSC	Research Support Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIMA	University of Malawi

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The University of Malawi (UNIMA) is a public university in Malawi, a country situated in the Sub Saharan African region. It constitutes traditionally of four (4) colleges that are classified according to specialization. In August 2017, the Chancellor of the university, who happens to be the president of Malawi, approved a recommendation from the UNIMA Council to separate the four colleges from the University to become individual universities. This separation was called a delinking process as the one college was to remain UNIMA with the other three colleges delinking from it to transform into new universities. This was in line with the recommendations of a Public-Sector Reform Commission established by the Government of Malawi to review the functions and operations of public, government-funded entities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in delivering public services and outputs (Public Sector Reform report 2015). One of the colleges to become a university is the College of Medicine (COM), which shall be the focal interest of this study.

The reforms in UNIMA are not an isolated case. For some decades universities worldwide have gone through major governance reforms and changes, which entailed a major shift in the logic, understanding and practice of who they are and what they do. During this period different policy rationales and governance models have been evolving. Overall university governance reforms reflected the broader New Public Management (NPM) reforms focused on increasing productivity in public sectors and institutions (Christensen, 2011). The reforms incorporated in various ways implications for the universities' governance structure and expected performance, organizational autonomy, control, funding and leadership (Howells et al., 2014). These reforms were noticeable also in the Malawian higher education system. Malawian universities though, just like most Sub-Saharan African universities, are hybrids of colonial institutions, designed to train an elite skilled class for post-independence governance ,and modern institutions preparing African students to be the next leaders in national development (Buflin, 2009). However, Buflin continued to note that in the previous two decades, there had been a fast-growing expectation from the society to create knowledge, improve equity and respond to student needs – and to do so effectively and efficiently. In response to this the Malawian public higher education system had been undergoing reforms such as the decentralization of universities and restructuring of higher education institutions.

The reforms mirrored the New Public Management reforms and neo liberal movement elsewhere where universities were given more autonomy in organizational governance matters. An OECD analysis on Education Policy (2003), however, states how there could be a tension within governance of higher education to assure independence and dynamism while promoting key economic and social objectives. This may result in more autonomy but combined with more regulations and accountability systems. Economists and political scientists argued that dysfunctional government institutions played a central part in many of the world's current most pressing economic and social problems (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008). This might imply that also in a university the quality of governance (or effectiveness) was a key factor in the productivity of the university though this is rarely discussed under the topic of quality in higher education. The first thing that comes to mind when assessing the quality of education of an institution, country or region was the academic outputs and not the leadership and administrative support structures which contribute to these outputs. Thus, the starting point of this study is that I want to make a meaningful contribution to the understanding of the outcomes of reforms in Malawian higher education by applying a 'quality of governance' perspective.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In general, new public management reforms in the area of public organizations' governance implied that public organizations were becoming more autonomous while at the same time coming under more scrutiny and control (Christensen, 2011, Magalhães et al, 2013). Despite the increase in control, these reforms have been adopted in most countries around the world including Malawi. The reforms in higher education in Malawi were a result of both external and internal factors that seemed to reflect the new public management agenda with the main objective being to improve efficiency and effectiveness in delivering the service of higher education to the society. This in turn was expected to contribute to the improvement in the quality of higher education and consequently its contribution to the development of the country.

The application of the ideas introduced by the new public management reform agenda of governance varied across different country and institutional settings and this shall further be discussed in the literature review. This was a result of how different political actors and institutions understood the concept and to what extent it could be adopted within a specific national or institutional context. In Malawi there is little empirical literature on reforms in the

universities and thus it was not clear as to what was really the major influence and underlying ideologies of these reforms in practice. My perception is that ideas were just borrowed from other universities and countries globally, following donor recommendations or a result of political actors attempting to gain popularity with no clear understanding of the dimensions linked to the reforms. To decide on what reforms to introduce in the governance of the higher education sector, there would have been a need to understand the concepts, rationales and challenges that were crucial in certain political, bureaucratic and economic environments.

My interest and curiosity were to understand the origins and effects of the reforms on the organization and effectiveness in the College of Medicine. Thus, this study is interested to find assumptions or ideas that may have influenced the governance reforms in the University of Malawi with the College of Medicine as a focal point to better understand the reform intentions, the evolution process and the developments in autonomy and capacity over the past decade. This was also to have a better understanding of where the College seemed to be heading. Based on these considerations, the overall research problem addressed in this study was therefore **How has the College of Medicine interpreted governance reforms in relation to the University of Malawi and Malawi Government Reforms from a quality of governance perspective?**

1.3 Scope and Research Questions

The study focused on the governance reforms in one college of UNIMA, the College of Medicine (COM). To address the research problem stated earlier the study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the main elements of the University of Malawi's governance reforms in the last decade?
 - The main aim is to understand the origins of UNIMA reforms and how they relate to theories and notions of trends in public governance reforms in general and university governance reforms in particular. I also discuss how specific the reforms are to Malawi in relation to public governance reforms in general.
2. What are the main changes in the University of Malawi's governance structure in general and the College of Medicine in particular following the governance reforms?

- My interest here is to look at changes in the actual components that constitute the governance structure of COM and how these components relate to each other. This includes the various actors, and decision-making systems. The focus will be on the evolution of the governance structure from its origin to date.
3. How can the changes in the governance structure of COM be interpreted from a quality of governance perspective?

Understanding the effects of the governance reforms would require looking at the outcomes or performance of the College in relation to the reforms. However, this has been argued by Fukuyama (2013), as not being a straightforward process, which could produce invalid results. However, Fukuyama provides a model that shall be used in this study using the concepts of autonomy and capacity as a tool to suggest the effectiveness of a governance system. Therefore, with respect to this question I will look at how we can interpret possible impacts of the governance reforms on the quality of governance at COM by looking at and interpreting the changes in autonomy and capacity in the College following government reforms.

1.4 Relevance of study

The development of delinking the colleges from UNIMA was being discussed as early as 2003 and the hope was that the colleges would be able to have more autonomy in charting their course of expansion and attracting additional funding with less interference and bureaucracies. There had, however, been many stakeholders in Malawi who believed that the opening of new universities was not wise and would not solve the problems of the existing universities (Chimombo, 2003).

The colleges saw the university's central office as a duplication of functions, tasks and roles that were taken care of by its colleges and as such a waste of resources, capacity and time. This was corroborated by the World Bank in its reports on higher education in Malawi (Mambo, 2017). On the other hand, the central office felt that it was too early to leave the colleges on their own because it felt that they lacked the capacity to manage the responsibilities of being a self-standing, independent university. This brought tensions between the colleges and the central office but due to a lack of empirical evidence the arguments felt to be more emotional and personal than rational and analytical. The 'delinking' development pulled the colleges away from a centralized structure and thus

seemed to give them more autonomy in running their own institutional affairs. However, it was not certain what level of capacity the colleges possessed without an empirical analysis and we could only speculate what changes may have arisen due to the reforms.

Although the proposal to delink was already approved, it can be argued that it would have been of benefit to look at the trends of governance in the colleges from where they were coming to the present and their projected future. The transformation of these colleges into universities required an appreciation of the concepts of governance that related to the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution and a reflection of the status quo of their systems. Good governance was perceived to be key in determining the pace and direction of African higher education development, particularly regarding the improvement of the quality of the education provided by the universities, the quality of research, measured e.g., in the research output by universities, and the intention to strengthen institutional leadership and management (Teferra & Altbach, 2003). The study was expected to give insight into the implementation of the university governance reforms and guide policy strategies in future restructuring proposals while also adding knowledge on the less researched area of quality of governance especially in higher education of Malawi.

Having worked in the administrative unit of COM as an Assistant Registrar, I was privy to the fact that the college had an interest to have a study done on effectiveness and efficiency within the college for future decision making. Since I was sponsored by the college, it was my hope that my study would contribute to the improvement of the productivity in COM as it transforms into a university making its investments in building my capacity worthwhile.

1.5 Study Limitations

The study was constrained financially. A richer study would, for example, have involved a comparative approach with another college within the university or with another local university. Geographically these institutions are far apart which would require extra travel costs. Skype interviews were considered, however, due to unreliable internet service in Malawi and frequent electricity outages, this was ruled out as an option.

Another limitation was the period of study being short as it was bound to a Master's degree thesis project requirements and the fieldwork for the study being conducted in Malawi. Data was collected within a month just after the Christmas break at a time that most people would extend holidays or immediately have strings of meetings making it hard to make

appointments. A longer period would have allowed for using more respondents/interviewees who would have added value to the information collected.

There had been little research done in higher education in Malawi implying that finding relevant literature was a challenge. Most literature discussed Africa or Sub Saharan Africa collectively giving a broad picture of governance without considering the uniqueness of each individual country.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

The thesis comprises of seven chapters that have sub-divisions in them. Chapter One is the chapter that introduces the thesis with a statement of problem, scope, research questions and the relevance of the study. It also brings forward some limitations faced during the study.

Chapter two presents the background of the study and the context in which the study was conducted. Here the emphasis is on the brief history and governance structure of the higher education system of Malawi, UNIMA and COM. By summarizing literature relating to the topic Chapter three gives an overview of the different interpretations and perspectives of governance, how it relates to ideas of new public management and neoliberalism, and how governance reforms affect different low-income countries.

Chapter four explains the analytical framework from the perspective of quality of governance that was used in this study. The key concept being, the relationship between autonomy and capacity in determining the potential of an institution to be productive. Chapter five is the methodology chapter that shows what research methods and tools were used in collecting data to answer the research questions within the analytical framework used. Quality and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter six is where I present my findings and analysis from the data collected through interviews and documents. The analysis focused on the main indicators used to determine changes in capacity and autonomy in COM reforms while relating the reforms to National and UNIMA governance reforms. Chapter seven is the last chapter that summaries the main findings of the study in trying to answer the research questions raised and making recommendations for further considerations.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

To further understand the context of this study this chapter presents a background of UNIMA and COM and the political climate in which they operate. I will first discuss the history of higher education in Malawi from independence and how it evolved and grew. Next, I will discuss the governance structure of the University of Malawi with a focus on the College of Medicine.

2.2 Background of Higher Education in Malawi

In 1964 Malawi gained independence from the British, changed its name from Nyasaland and adopted a single-party political system with a life president who could not be contested. It was only through a referendum and elections in 1994 that it obtained a democratic, multi-party government. The idea that Malawi should have a university was first conceived soon after the country got its independence in 1964. At the government's request, the educational needs of the country were surveyed by the American Council on Education and the then British Inter-University Council on Higher Education Overseas. In October 1964, the University of Malawi was founded under the University of Malawi (Provisional Council) Act, which was later replaced by the University of Malawi Act of 1974 (UNIMA Calendar, 2016).

“UNIMA was established to provide quality and relevant university education, initiate educational and industrial research for the benefit of the entire education system and the world of work, and promote dialogue and exchange of information between the university and the public sector.” (Chimombo, 2003 p415)

The country was autocratically ruled by the State President Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda who strategically oversaw all government sectors. There was little to no public organization autonomy in the governance system. People who opposed the ideologies of the government were either exiled or executed. The University of Malawi was not spared with its fair share of suppression when it came to decision making. The president realized that the university was a potential political threat to his hegemony over the distribution of advantages in the new social order and thus made sure he had total control of the university and punished anyone who opposed (Mwira, 2003 ; Chimombo, 2003; Holland, 2010). The government introduced a

theme of “building the Nation” and the four pillar stones were unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline which were inscribed into the values of the University of Malawi.

The higher education model was influenced by both the British and the US higher education models as the president realized that he needed these countries for the university to succeed as the country did not have the capacity to maintain high standards in the universities. On the other hand, the proposed principles were in line with the external partners’ interests and expectations for the nation’s development and advancing mutual goals in the geopolitical struggle against communism (Holland, 2010)

The Anglo-American cooperation in higher education created a unique education system that incorporated the two systems with more influence from the American degree structure. Students are selected to public universities after O-level, the first year is on general studies and specialization is done in the second year and at the end students would graduate with a four-year general degree.¹ The governance structure, however, was adopted from the British model with a Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor overseeing the university business. The Chancellor, being the head of state, to be in full control and avoid opposition from the university. This hybrid system brought irregularities as more colleges were established with each college adopting different grading systems. Chancellor College² eventually used the American Grade Point Average (GPA) system while the other colleges used a percentage system. Grades were also classified differently depending on the programme and length of study which varied across the colleges.

2.3 Capacity Building

Since the country had little expertise in higher education, most of the initial staff members were expatriates. Most of the first Malawian students to attend the University were groomed to take up positions as staff associates who would then be sent overseas for further training sponsored by the British and American governments and capacity was thus built swiftly. Even the first four Vice-Chancellors were British, and it was not until 1992 when the first local Vice-Chancellor was appointed. Throughout the 1980s government financial support declined due to a neo liberal political movement influenced by the United States. The focus was shifted towards primary school while the University was expected to be more market

¹ An exception was with Law and Medicine degrees that were accumulatively 5 and 6 years respectively

² Refer to description on page 10 and geographical location in Figure 1

oriented and was seen more as an individual (private) good rather than being for the general welfare of the nation (public good) (Chimombo, 2003; Holland, 2010).

The founding philosophy of the university had proved problematic from a good governance perspective. First the idea of autonomous institutions outside the control of the national leader was unacceptable. This was in line with the opinion of the emerging independent African leaders many of who believed in “the ruler knowing and presiding over all” (Mwira, 2003 p32). Second it had predominantly been dependent on public funding in an economically struggling environment that is reliant on donor funding. This had consequences on the adoption of the neoliberal ideas that had been imposed on the university.

2.4 Implications of Neoliberalism and NPM

The founding organizational practices were challenged by the neoliberal higher education model by disconnecting higher education from national development and legitimizing the withdrawal of state and donor patronage from the university (Holland, 2010). During the 1960s and 1970s most Malawian academics were forced to leave the university or the country for possessing opposing political views to the government (Mwira, 2003). However, the years that followed, staff left due to fewer opportunities, declining living standards and morale in hope of finding greener pastures. Funding had been cut down in the University which was not sustainable in the retention of experts. This yet again left the University with few senior academics and capable staff (Chimombo 2003; Holland, 2010).

Though the College of Medicine (COM) was established in 1991 we see a similar scenario in the lack of capacity to train medical doctors in the country. In this case the first students were taught in universities outside the country for the first 2 to 3 pre-clinical years. These students were to be the ones on who to build the capacity of the College upon completion of their studies. Most of these students did return and played an important part in the growth of the University. However, there were some that never returned and more leaving afterwards. Even though staff members are still being recruited locally their academic competences are questionable and there is a noticeable presence of expatriate staff. The study will see how the capacity has been affected by the high staff turnover in the university and what qualifications are dominant. It should be noted that the university also suffered a great loss of staff in untimely deaths from the mid-1990s due to HIV/AIDS (Holland, 2010).

2.5 Malawi Higher Education System

Malawian higher education has since democracy developed from consisting of one public university³ to 4 public universities and 19 registered private universities. Initially access to the one university was limited and reserved for the best of the best while the rest of the eligible students attended technical and vocational colleges. It was only in 1999 that the second public university was opened in the Northern part of the country. This was caused by the growing demand for higher education and the demand from the nation to increase access to universities as most qualified students were denied access. All the public universities rely largely on the funding from the government for the running of their affairs.

UNIMA, the only public university then, was in 1967 comprised of the Institute of Public Administration, Soche Hill College of Education and the Polytechnic in Blantyre and Bunda College of Agriculture in Lilongwe. In 1973 UNIMA restructured and moved part of it to Zomba forming Chancellor College making its total composition three colleges including Bunda College of Agriculture and the Polytechnic. Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN) was the fourth constituent college established in 1979 and College of Medicine established in 1991 was the fifth college of UNIMA. In the attempt to increase the number of universities Bunda College of Agriculture was delinked from the UNIMA in 2011 to merge with Natural Resources College⁴ forming the Lilongwe University Agriculture of Natural Resources (LUANAR). Figure 1 shows the campus locations of the colleges of UNIMA and LUANAR.

³ University of Malawi (UNIMA)

⁴ Lilongwe Natural Resources College was a stand-alone technical college up to Diploma level

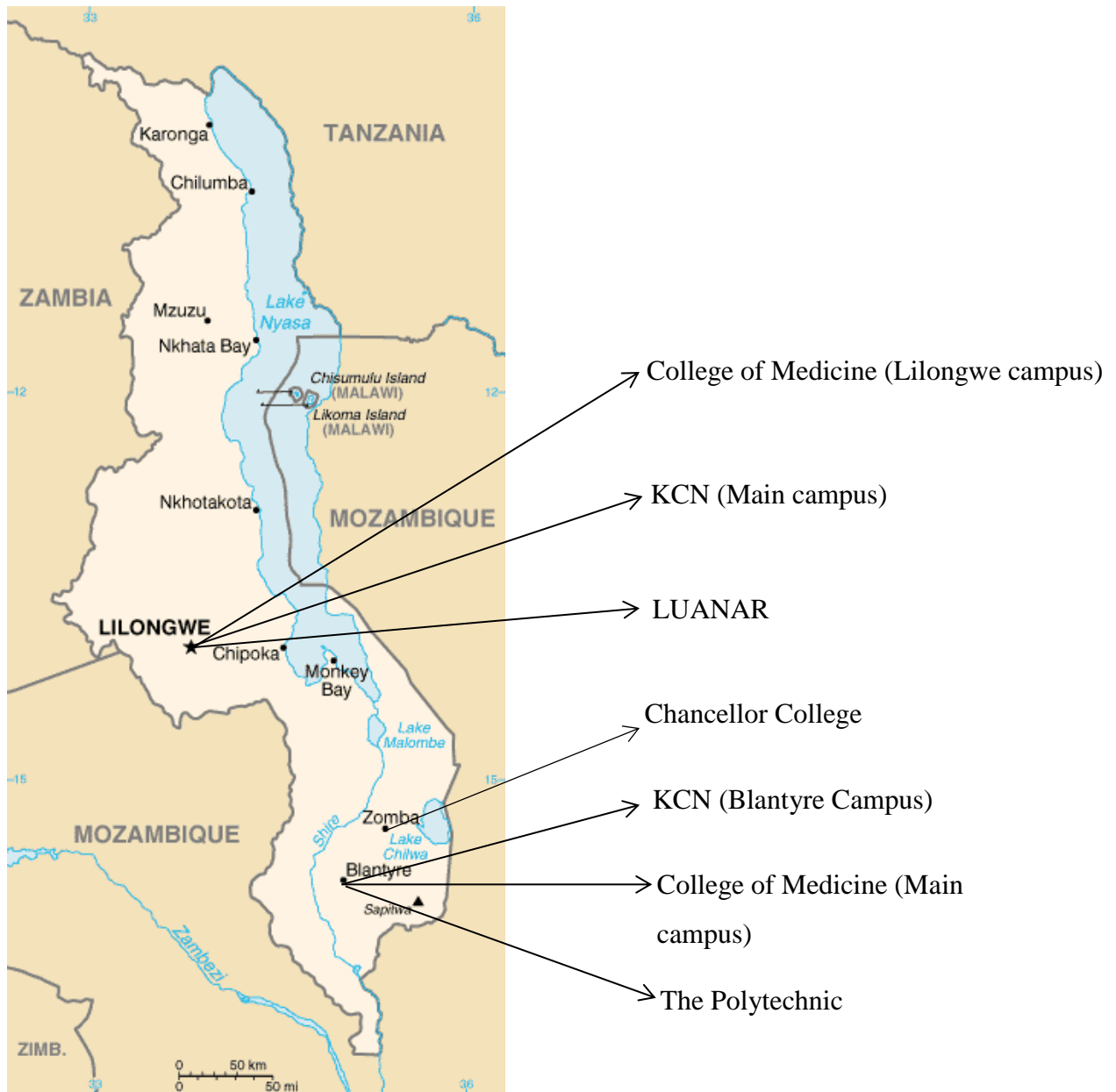


Figure 1: Map of Malawi showing locations LUANAR and colleges of UNIMA

In 2011 the National Council for Higher Education was established as an external governing body that facilitated the universities in the selection of students. The council was also mandated to register and accredit postsecondary institutions to ensure quality is observed in the delivery of higher education in the Nation (NCHE Act, 2011).

2.6 Governance and Organizational Structure of UNIMA

To understand the governance structure of a higher education institution there are levels of authority to be considered. These levels are summarized by Clark (1983) into three main groups, the under structure, middle structure, and the super structure. These levels according to Clark, define roles of actors in the university system and who can make decisions that affect the institution. Clark describes these levels further with the types of authority they may hold respectively, the Academic Authority (professorial/collegial), Enterprise Authority (institutional), System based authority (governmental). The running of the institution involves the coordination of three main actors, the State, the academic oligarchy and the market. This coordination is commonly referred to as Clark's triangle of coordination (Clark, 1983). The governance model of the university can be categorized depending on which actor has a greater influence or rather what steers it. We start by looking at the UNIMA governance structure, considering the fact that COM's was embedded in this structure;

2.6.1 University Governance Structure

The University of Malawi as a public institution falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) which is responsible for developing the vision, mission and strategic direction of higher education in general while the department of Higher Education in the ministry liaises closely with universities on policy issues (Mambo et al, 2016). It is governed by the University of Malawi Act of 1974, amended in 1998 and 2011.

As explained earlier the Chancellor is the head of the governance structure. Though the position is ceremonial, the Chancellor is still the ultimate decision maker on major changes in the university that link directly to the society such as tuition fees, salaries and restructuring of the university organisation. He also appoints three members of the Council, including the chairperson, who act as a medium between the University and the Chancellor. Since universities are statutory organisations in Malawi there is some level of autonomy where individual institutions are expected to elaborate their own strategic plans based on the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2008-17. At the same time, there is limited financial autonomy as tuition fees are not allowed to be independently determined and funds are allocated by government (UNIMA Act, 1998; Mambo et al., 2016).

As prescribed in the UNIMA Act 1998 The University of Malawi Council oversees management and administration, including property and revenues and oversight of all university related activities including relations with the public. The Council considers and approves recommendations from the University through the Vice-Chancellor or Senate depending on whether they are administrative or academic in nature. The Council consists of eighteen standing members and co-opted members depending on expertise in the topic of discussion. Among the standing members are elected members of Senate, two ministerial representatives, all college principals, two elected students' representatives (one female, one male). This composition seems less democratic and more executive because a high percentage of the members, including the chairperson who has the final say, are appointed officials and government representatives. Figure 2 shows the governance structure of UNIMA. The arrows show the direction of authority from lower to higher authority. The Registrar, Finance Officer, Information and Communication Technology Directorate, Estates Development Officer and Procurement Officer are administrative positions that support the academic functions in the colleges and hence the arrows point horizontally towards the academic positions in the figure.

Going further down the hierarchical ladder each college is semi-autonomous as each college has its own budgets and is given mandate to make certain decisions at college level in line with policies and regulations set by the Council. To understand the governance dimensions of UNIMA and its colleges an overview of the two main structures, central administration and college administration, shall be discussed.

making occurs in the UNIMA the next part will briefly explain the governance structure in COM.

2.6.3 College Structure of UNIMA colleges

The colleges had extensions to the offices at the university central office. The governance structure was set in this way so that colleges ran day to day operations smoothly without the interference of the central office considering that the colleges were structured around different disciplines and were not centrally located geographically. The UNIMA central office therefore consolidated, coordinated and guided activities of COM and the other colleges. Figure 3 shows the typical organogram of a college in UNIMA highlighting the governance structure within the college. The college principals were the heads of the colleges and an extension of the Vice-Chancellor’s office acting on its behalf in college administrative and academic affairs. A college registrar representing the University Registrar, managed all college operations, but he/she reported to the Principal. In addition to this each faculty had a dean and deputy, department heads and deputies and directors for research centres...

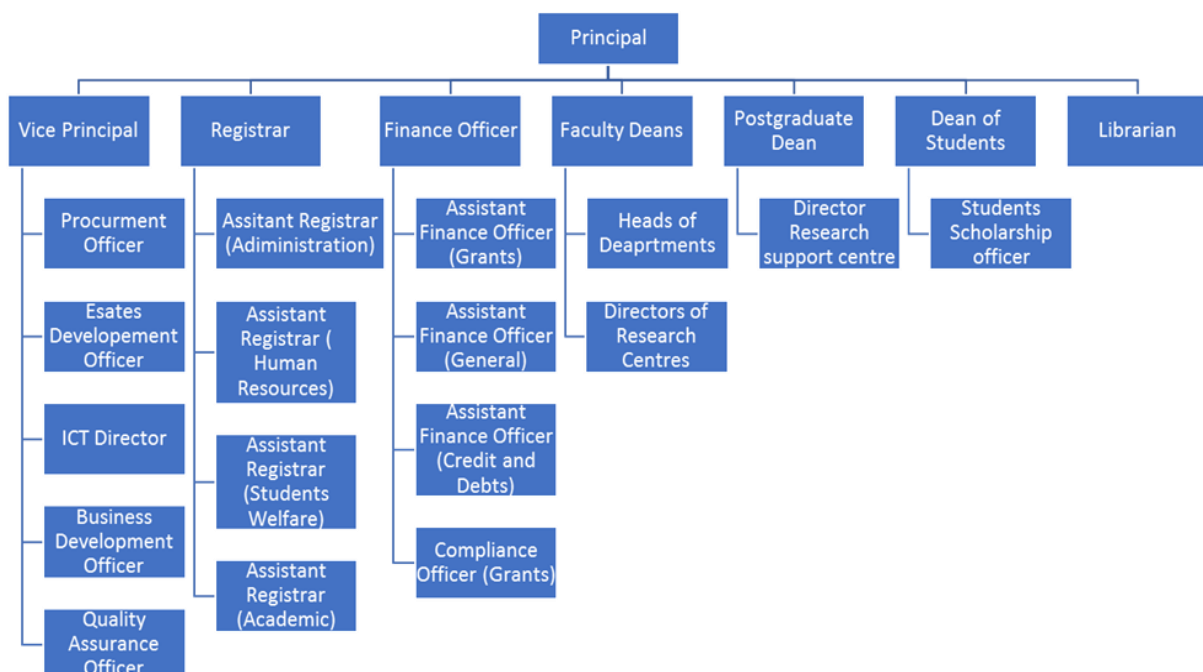


Figure 3: UNIMA College Organogram, 2018

2.7 Decision Making in UNIMA

The council is the ultimate approving body in the University. This seems to show a more centralized authority system in the university and the membership depicts it as being mixed with external members. However, the composition of the council is dominated by internal academics and government officials with little representation from the private sector and civil society groups and there have been poorly defined governance structures, lines of authority and delegation of powers between council and UNIMA's leadership (Mambo et al, 2016; NESP, 2008). There was a decentralization shift over two decades ago that had given college principals the mandate to manage college funds and human resource functions without the approval of the central office. Clear guidelines had not been developed on specific tasks and responsibilities and thus there was duplication of functions. The central office only approves employment of senior members of staff and end of year assessment results. There is indeed some form of hierarchical structure defined on paper but though the appointment of council members is 'intended to assist in aligning institutions with the government's general policy and development agenda, in practice they can contribute to tensions, and limit the autonomy of institutions as envisaged by their foundational Acts' (Mambo et al, 2016 p xxiv).

Furthermore, it should be noted that though the Council is the final approving governance body, decisions were usually made by committees. The statutory committees that made or discussed proposals at university level were Senate, Management and Appointments committee. Colleges also had the same committees that ultimately fed into the university committees which are practically a representation of all the four colleges. Academic resolutions and decisions are proposed and discussed by Senate that comprises of the Deans of all the Colleges, faculty representatives, Principals, one student representative and the University Registrar as secretary (UNIMA Act, 1998). The University Registrar is not part of the academic decisions but rather makes sure all resolutions are within the jurisdiction of the committee and the prevailing regulations and policies. Administrative matters are discussed by university management which comprises of the deans, principals, registrars, finance officers, the university internal auditor, the university estates development officer, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor as Chairperson. Appointments committee comprises of all registrars, deans, principals and a co-opted member appointed by the Vice-Chancellor considering the subject of appointment. It has been questioned whether all these committees were effective in the governance of the university (Chimombo, 2003; Mambo et al., 2016).

2.8 College of Medicine

The College of Medicine is the youngest but fastest growing college in the UNIMA. It is well known for being more effective and efficient than the other constituent colleges of UNIMA. This is noticeable by the lack of strikes by the students and staff as compared to the sister colleges. So, while the other colleges have been known to be involved in political squabbles with the governance system of UNIMA, causing delays in the academic calendar, the College of Medicine has been an example of a college doing well in terms of governance. “Why are you researching on a college that is doing well? Would it not be better to study the problematic colleges like the Chancellor College?” This was a question a senior administrator in the university asked me when I explained my interest to research the governance in the medical college. The comment only made me more curious to find out reality of this perception and how that relates to the concept of the quality of governance. I also believe that perceptions without empirical research cannot give a solid conclusion as the administrator and many others may suggest.

2.9 Conclusion

In terms of governance the complexity of UNIMA and its relationship to the colleges, including COM, is a result of its growth from a single institute to an institute comprising several colleges. One challenge was that the colleges were established in different geographical location. However, though UNIMA had grown to several colleges it used the same governance system it used for the one college by giving each college its own central administration and having one main administration overlooking these administrators. We see an example of the colleges implementing policies differently with the different grading and assessment systems within the same university. Although we could argue that the difference in the grading system may be the lack of Malawi having one system for the country⁵ we would still expect some level of uniformity in the same university. This example shows that though the colleges were under the same central administration of UNIMA they had different ways of governing and implementing policies in the colleges. Such differences are expected to cause conflicts and delays in making decisions that cater for all the colleges resulting into inefficiencies that would affect the quality of governance as a university. Looking at the background and structure of UNIMA one can see how reforms would be called for and how

⁵ NCHE was established to enhance quality of higher education in Malawi by bringing harmonization between different higher education systems within Malawi. (quote).

the colleges would aspire to be independent universities. After all, they already had central administrative offices similar to the UNIMA Central Office.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Higher education systems across the globe have experienced major changes in scale and shape over recent decades mainly due to changing of governance, funding and access policies (Howells et al., 2014; Sall & Oanda, 2014). These changes are in the hope of a future for higher education institutions that is likely to consist of more self-regulated, dynamic and innovative organizations (Gornitzka et al., 2005). University governance reforms are very much a reflection of the broader New Public Management reforms that focus on increasing efficiency in public organizations (Christensen, 2011). There has not been much research on governance reforms that has taken place in the Malawi higher education system and how that relates to the productivity and effectiveness of the universities.

My literature review will include global developments and changes in other low-income countries with the aim to examine trends in reforms and how they relate to the Malawian context. It is noted that higher education governance reforms though aimed towards similar goals of improved efficiency and effectiveness are usually contextual and therefore would usually have different approaches and outcomes. Firstly, though, it would be important to understand the term governance and what theories and concepts are discussed in the study of governance. Then we shall discuss how reforms in public higher education systems relate to national public reforms and how governance issues are addressed in this sector.

3.2 Understanding the concept of “Governance”

Governance is a concept that is used and defined in different ways. In etymology the word governance is derived from the Greek ‘kybenan’ and ‘kybernetes’ which means ‘to steer’ and ‘pilot or helmsman’ (Rosenau, 2009 p14). In other words, Rosenau states that “the process of governance is the process whereby an organization or society steers itself”. Fukuyama (2013) simply puts it as “a government’s ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not.” Weiss (2000) on the other hand, argues that this term is mostly used synonymously with government. Weiss further explains how it was originally used to connote a complex set of structures and processes associated with a system of national administration, but this view has since changed with more definitions arising to suit certain agendas. For instance, The Commission

of Global Governance defines it as the “sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs” (Weiss, 2000 p796).

Weis (2000) goes further to explain how this modern definition is only but one of various definitions from different bodies worldwide that he presents in his article. For instance, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences defines governance as a process whereby elements in society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and economic and social development. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the other hand states that governance refers to a complex web of legislative frameworks, institutional characteristics and how these relate to the whole system, how money is allocated to institutions and how they are accountable for how it is spent, as well as less formal structures and relationships which steer and influence behavior. This is similar to Magalhães et al.’s (2013) definition as the political management of rules systems, both formal and informal, that drive values and norms affecting actors and constellations of actors’ behaviors and attitudes. The World Bank is a crucial player in low-income countries in dictating development policies and strategies. Thus, its definition is connected to economic concepts. It defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources. The three main aspects identified by the World Bank are important to this paper as UNIMA is located in a low-income country setting with a major influence from the World Bank. These aspects are; i) the form of political regime ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of country’s economic and social resources for development, and iii) the capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions (Weiss, 2000).

The literature shows that the definition of governance varies across different schools of thought. However, there is an agreement that governance involves different actors at different levels and procedures or processes in designing and implementing policies within governments. In summary and simple terms, we can say that governance is what governments do. The same idea of governance can go beyond governments and be applied to organizations or institutions whether public and private. Cloete et al (2005) apply governance to higher education as the way the higher education sector is organized and structured and the way in which the management functions and decision- making structures are arranged. Considering that this study is interested in governance of a higher education institution within the public

government arena, this definition is closest to the framework of the study and was therefore preferred. However, some aspects of other definitions will also be considered.

It has been difficult to define concisely the term governance without looking at the elements of the definition, and therefore terms can be added to describe the type of governance in discussion depending on the discipline or context (Mehde, 2006; van Waarden & van Kersbergen, 2009). Public governance, good governance, and quality of governance are terms that are of interest in this study.

3.2.1 Good Governance and Quality of Governance

‘Good governance’ is a term, amongst other things, used in the international agenda coined by the World Bank in relation to the goals of improving governance in developing countries (Mehde, 2006; van Waarden & van Kersbergen, 2009; Weiss, 2000). In this sense good governance is used in the economic development field with an emphasis on the political, administrative and economic values of legitimacy and efficiency. Although there has been criticism on the need to confront the economic and political conditions of recipient countries who sometimes tend to view this concept as unwelcome intrusions (Mehde, 2006). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) suggest that there are three core qualities of an institution that ensures that available capacities, assets and resources are used efficiently and effectively in time of crises. These are performance, adaptability and stability. Several indicators are proposed that can measure these three qualities. The main principals hinged on good governance according to the MDGs are civil service, participation and inclusion, accountability and rule of law, non- discrimination and equality (UNDP, 2011).

Fukuyama (2013) challenges the empirical measures of the quality of governance since according to him there is little agreement on what exactly constitutes high quality government. In his argument he rejects the use of output measures and rather proposes a two-dimensional framework using capacity and autonomy to measure the quality of executive branches and bureaucracies. The argument derives from the fact that low income countries are advised to reduce bureaucratic autonomy while high-income ones seek to increase it. If measures were equal this would not be the case. The underlying observation here is the difference in the capacity of a bureaucracy that is capable to manage a certain level of autonomy. What can be taken from this observation is that in trying to improve quality of governance one may not merely increase the autonomy or capacity of a bureaucracy

independently from one another and expect high quality governance or refer to it as good governance. The question is in how the increased capacity is used to achieve the expected outcomes. This is where autonomy comes in, to consider what mandates can be given to certain levels of capacity for achieving the desired quality of governance.

3.3 New Public Management and Neoliberalism in Low Income Countries

New public management is the term that is commonly used with discussions of reforms in governance of public administration and management. We have seen how van Waarden & van Kersbergen link this to good governance. It refers, in its loosest definition, to the public sector applying private sector techniques in the attempt to improve efficiency and effectiveness (McLaughlin & Osborne, 2002; Hope Sr, 2002 p210). Hope links it to the notion of trust in economic rationalization through the creation of public value for money. However, this has been questioned and has been debated by scholars on its effectiveness and whether it is a fixed phenomenon or process that can be applied in any situation despite the different contextual settings (McLaughlin & Osborne, 2002; Peters, 2001). Neoliberalism is concerned with the shift of power from national government to multi-level governance (Harmes, 2006). Van Waarden & van Kersbergen (2009, p145) quote Rhodes saying good governance “marries the *new public management* to the advocacy of liberal democracy”. The NPM and Neoliberal theories are not the key frameworks of this study, however, they help us understand the underlying reforms in UNIMA. The process of change to improve efficiency and effectiveness can be linked to the ideologies of NPM.

The following are some elements of the NPM highlighted by Hope Sr (2002 p211), from Aucion 1990 and Bale& Dale 1998.

- a. The adoption of private sector management practices in the public sector
- b. An emphasis on efficiency
- c. A movement away from input controls, rules and procedures toward output measurement and performance targets
- d. A preference for private ownership, contestable provision and contracting out of public services
- e. Devolution of management control with improved reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

New public management has been perceived as the future of governing that will solve issues that have to do with public governance though we have seen earlier that scholars have argued against its one size fits all approach (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011). In a study of comparing the administrative reforms of low-income and transitional countries, Peters (2001) argues that though the NPM idea seems appropriate in the long term, it was evident in these countries the first need was to institutionalize the traditional or Weberian system of administration before moving towards the NPM ideals. NPM being targeted at efficiency and effectiveness through more flexibility and deregulation, according to Peters, it was important for these values to be understood culturally before implementing the new ways of governance. In other words, these countries have been historically rigid with strict rules and regulations as compared to Western countries and still there were ways to circumvent these restrictions through corruption and putting more value in personalized values as opposed to values of productivity. What is being highlighted here is if rules were not respected previously then what would happen if there was more flexibility provided through deregulation? This suggests that responsibility and accountability are important values that are to be considered when attempting to implement reforms using the NPM approach. Hope (2002) agrees to the lack of these values in the sub Saharan Africa governance culture. However, he states that despite this realization the pressures to proceed with the implementation of NPM in the region include economic crises, unstable political order, institutional inability to implement policies in timely and effective manner, and influence of international experiences.

3.3.1 Decentralization

One major aspect of the NPM model is structural devolution to smaller, autonomous entities which often had to be founded only for this purpose (Mehde, 2006). This devolution is a form of decentralization. From a political perspective decentralization promotes good governance, which is interpreted as greater pluralism, accountability, transparency, citizen participation and development. The idea behind decentralization is to provide high quality services by increasing managerial autonomy. This is to be realized through reducing central administrative controls, measuring and rewarding performance, enabling managers to acquire human and technological resources to meet performance targets, creating receptiveness to competition, for improving economic and managerial efficiency or effectiveness and for enhancing better governance (Hussein, 2004).

The most common modes of decentralization in public governance worldwide, including Sub Saharan Africa, are *deconcentration*, the passing down of selected administrative functions to lower level within government agencies or departments; *delegation*, the transfer of specific authority and decision-making powers to organizations that are outside the regular bureaucratic structure indirectly controlled by government such as parastatals; *devolution*, the granting of decision-making power to lower authorities allowing them to take full responsibility without reference back to the authorizing government; and *privatization*, the transfer of operational control and responsibilities of the government functions and services to the private sector (Hope Sr, 2002; Hussein, 2004) Though there has been criticism on the use of the NPM in low-income countries due to the lack of an accountability and responsibility culture, Hope still believes that from indicators of an earlier study he conducted, decentralization in Africa has resulted in better governance and thus was to be expanded.

3.4 Governance Reforms in Higher Education Institutions

Higher education is considered as an important lever for governments in seeking to pursue national objectives. This has aroused an interest in the way the higher education institutions should be governed globally. As a result, reforms in these institutions have taken the change of governance models into consideration (OECD 2003).

‘With its roots in a neo-liberal ideology, higher education management reform is part of a global trend where market ideology and market or quasi- market modes of regulation are fused with a set of management practices drawn from the corporate sector; privatization, downsizing and outsourcing, budget diversification, benchmarking, performance appraisal, quality assurance and so on’ (Meek et al., 2010 p1).

Higher education managers are to ensure that their institutions become more entrepreneurial, adaptive and commercially responsive (Hyde et al., 2013). Meek therefore argues that higher education management or governance cannot be discussed without setting it in the broader context of NPM which explains the introduction of the concept in the previous section.

3.4.1 Main Elements of Governance in Higher Education Institutions

The governance of higher education institutions is not per definition the same as in other public or private organizations. Scholars have described universities as a specific kind of organization or an incomplete organization (Musselin, 2007). The reason for this classification is the nature of the institution, that is, the basic set of characteristics of universities. Other terms associated with higher education institutions, specifically universities, are organized anarchies or loosely coupled organizations (Musselin, 2007, Cohen et al, 1972). Loosely coupling according to Weick 1976 refers to the low level of connection and coordination required by teaching and research activities within the institutions (Musselin, 2007). As a result, there is low interaction between separate units and departments based on knowledge-based ideas although each department has some level of authority (Clark, 1983). Despite this being an anomaly in a normal organization, this arrangement in the university is perceived to have worked for centuries.

The typical organizational structure of a higher education system was introduced in Chapter 2 referring to Clark (1983) who talks about different levels of authority. Just like any government agency or business, higher education institutions rely on bureaucratic structures to manage functions such as finance and facilities. In other public and private organizations though, there is usually a top down level of authority which is unlike a higher education institution where traditionally most decisions were made by the academic profession due to their expertise in the knowledge-based goods and services (Clark, 1983; Fairweather & Blalock, 2015; van Vught & de Boer, 2015). Even though this is the case there are other actors and decision makers both internal (managers, support staff, students) and external (government, funding agencies, evaluating committees, research contractors).

“The internal structures reflect these dynamics and the different operating functions of academic institutions. Distinct professional units-departments, schools, colleges – operate collegially but independently within an overall shared institutional context typically designed to govern decisions made about students (admissions, academics progress, degree-granting) and faculty (hiring, promotion, tenure) (Fairweather & Blalock, 2015 p3-4).

In relation to the levels of authority is the diffusion of decision-making powers over many sub units and actors which have led Clark to argue that ‘semi-autonomous departments and

schools, chairs and faculties act like small sovereign states as they pursue distinctive self-interests and stand over against the authority of the whole' (Clark, 1983 p266 -267). However, reforms over the last decades are believed to empower institutional management more in an aim to tighten the coupling which would make it easier to govern.

Institutional governance structures can be seen as formal or informal institutional decision making procedures and structures; changes in the composition, tasks and functioning of institutional governing bodies; and the growing involvement of external stakeholders in institutional governance issues (Frølich & Caspersen, 2015). In terms of the university we can say these include all the actors, systems and procedures that govern the university.

In conclusion it can be noted that the three main elements of higher education institutions that work together are the governance structure (decision-making, actors, mandates), organizational structure (Faculty, units and departments, hierarchical levels) and functions (education, research, 'third mission'). These three elements were the focal points of interest in understanding the reforms within the College of Medicine.

3.4.2 Complexity of Reforms in Higher Education Institution

Reforms in higher education institutions can result in different outcomes in different contextual settings. The main functions of the university have been to offer educational programmes, undertake research and provide services (more recently identified as 'third mission'). Universities are known as institutions highly resistant to change especially when the changes are more administrative (Hyde et al., 2013). Simsek & Louis (1994) investigated the change processes in the University of Minnesota from between the mid 1950's to the late 1980's. Their findings were that change processes could be both evolutionary and revolutionary according to the paradigm in which they existed. Evolutionary changes were common in the earlier years usually due to the loose coupling of the university and it being in a normalcy paradigm, a time when radical changes were not seen as necessary and members of the university were comfortable with the status quo. During this paradigm changes would only be seen at the top level with little or no change at the bottom. However, during a crisis paradigm, such as change in leadership or increase of student intake, there was a need for revolutionary reforms that affected the whole organization at the same time. They also observed that strategic planning was important to determine the change process, but this was effective only when new actors with new beliefs and values emerged and publicly challenged

the existing paradigm. In most institutions there seems to be a global pressure that is forcing changes that usually would have taken a longer period to implement. What is seen is that more revolutionary or radical changes are being implemented. I would still argue though that the revolutionary process still takes time as seen in the next example where implementation of new policies was challenging.

De Boer et al (2005) suggest that poor implementation of changes may have devastating consequences. They argue that moving policy from paper to practice can be a challenge. They also suggest that there is not a clear way on how success or failure can be measured. It is therefore very important to contextualize what is being considered as a success according to the system being studied. They go further to give an example of how a national success may be a local community failure. A study on two Dutch reforms over seven years from 1997 was conducted that sheds more light on these arguments. The two reforms were made in quality assurance and internal governance of the institutions. The changes were towards enforcing; 1) steering through quality assurance and the introduction and further development of instruments towards quality improvement; and 2) stronger hierarchical self-steering in higher education institutions and the strengthening of the power of deanship. It was found that though the reforms for quality were a success, it took several years before institutional managers sufficiently got grips with the quality assurance outcomes to use them as a lever to enhance their steering capacity within the institution. They argue that effects of policy may change over time, without effects at one time being more real than another time and only a series of concurrent evaluation studies can bring this to light. Change tends to seep in less rapidly and extensively than the mission statements of the new steering philosophy might propose. The study concluded that the Dutch higher education was still implementing reforms and because the change was evolutionary, initial successes would not be effective in the long run. They use the Red Queen principle: 'not only will they have to keep running to stay in the same place, and even harder if they want to go anywhere, but also by the time they get anywhere, the shape of the game board will have changed' (de Boer et al., 2005, p113).

Kezar & Eckel (2002), through an analysis of six American higher education institutions, find that context-based data help the policy makers to understand why and under what circumstances strategies work at an institution at a particular time. This implies that outcomes depend on factors such as political pressure from outside, the age of institutions and their academic and management cultures, as well as the personal ambitions of educational leaders.

The study was conducted on change processes over a four-year period. It showed that ideologies cannot just be replicated as there are several factors that come into play. What may be successful now may not be successful the next time it is applied whether within the same institution or another. A study of strategic planning in developing countries by Hayward (2008) noted that prioritizing critical problems and deciding where to start the change process in higher education was difficult. He did a case study on three countries namely Afghanistan, South Africa and Madagascar but drew experiences from other low-income countries including Malawi. He also noted that change took place only with the support and active participation of the leadership. The task of leadership was complex though, affected by the history of the institution, the players involved, internal and external factors, and the ability or capacity of leaders to move the process forward. These findings were similar to the findings of Kezar and Eckel (2002). He concludes to suggest that careful strategic planning and budgeting is the key to change in low-income countries.

3.4.3 Managerialism in Higher Education

In the new form of management or NPM the role of the middle-level academic managers in charge of units is becoming more 'professional' and emphasis is put more on their management capabilities as opposed to research and teaching capabilities. Therefore, management responsibilities of deans of faculty and heads of departments have expanded making them have a pivotal role between central management preferences and academic values and control (Meek et al., 2010). This therefore means the members of staff not only have to be masters of their respective academic fields, they must also have knowledge on management and public administration which in this case would sometimes entail further training to enhance their capacity. Meek defines middle-level academic managers as a difference between the institutional chief executive officers at the top of the organisational structure and other type of academic managers such as course coordinators at the bottom structure. In my thesis I refer to the middle-level managers as the central management of the college, the top managers being the executive officers at the university central office and the lower management being the deanship which Meek has defined as middle-level academic managers in his article. It is important to note however, that as COM becomes a university the middle-level managers would become the top managers of the newly formed university. Therefore, these middle-managers are of immense importance to the study in determining their capacity to govern a university. Clark (1983) describes how traditionally academics

were regulated through collegial governance and were focused more on knowledge production and academic governance. Hyde et al. (2013) refer to the roles of academic managers as just being good citizens furthering interests of their respective faculties and departments. However, they compare how recent reforms now expect academics to broaden tasks outside the traditional academic functions, and how management skills have become required. The promotion criteria in modern universities reflect this by not only considering research and teaching output but also evidence of leadership and organising activities of others. This has resulted into the senior academics being less into the scientific work and more into strategic work.

Schneijderberg & Merkator (2013) express that, among other factors, the growing autonomy of higher education institutions and new forms of governance have resulted into a growing number of new professionals in higher education that are neither academic nor administrative but are highly knowledgeable and possess skills in managing the core functions of higher education. In conclusion they quote Gornitzka (1998 p23) who after analysing the shift in administration in Norwegian universities, refers to it as a part of a silent managerial revolution. That is, the replacement of clerks and secretaries by administrative officers and managers. Institutional response has been that new positions and functions had been created.

3.4.4 Higher Education Reforms in Low Income Countries

Sall & Oanda (2014) summarise research findings from the CODESRIA Higher Education Leadership Programme (HELP), a program that reflects on issues of governance and leadership in African universities during their transformations. The program documented changes in governance practices in their historical and contemporary contexts. It was noted that African universities had problems in governance and leadership over the years from after independence (1960-1970) where they were mostly state funded to a time where fiscal crisis resulted into a decline of funding (from 1980). This decline was what led most universities to shift towards issues of accountability and efficiency accentuated by the introduction of New Public Management which called for reforms in structure and policy processes. What was drawn from various research groups, however, was that government residual powers in management remained a threat to real governance autonomy at university level, while faculty and students were more often overlooked on issues of policy and institutional governance even though they were important stakeholders.

Although there have been different views of the concept of neoliberalism and new public management, we have seen that low-income countries have not been left behind in the global adoption of New Public Management. It has been argued as to whether this copy and paste mentality would work in these countries considering the different contexts and level of development according to the global understanding of what it means to be developed. The World Bank reported that changes in the governance capabilities have shown to bring about some change in the quality of people's lives. Gustavson (2014), however, objects to one model being used on different governments and expect the same results due to a range of factors that differentiate the context. Nevertheless, there is consensus that change is required to improve quality and perhaps that change is subjective to each case. This also makes it hard to measure quality of governance. What would be the basis of measure? Would it be what is expected by the New Public Management theory which is considered western or based on achieving local objectives? Earlier in the chapter we have discussed the different implementations and outcomes that were seen in higher education systems in different political, economic and organizational settings.

Political and administrative decentralization of government and development structure has been introduced earlier as one of the reforms linked to NPM which has been implemented in most countries. In Malawi the reorganization of local governments towards a new decentralization system commenced in the 1990's. Though decentralization may be attributed to various concepts such as delegation, participation, divisionalisation, deconcentration and devolution the two major forms adopted by Malawi and other most countries are deconcentration and devolution (Hussein, 2004). In most Anglophone countries like Malawi, local government structures are facing problems, such as lack of local autonomy, high dependence on central government policy, shortage of financial resources and poor administrative capacity. Hussein furthers this argument as follows "Although Malawi has a multiplicity of actors in the political arena the situation has not genuinely translated into a democratic state" (Hussein, 2004, p123). This was observed 14 years ago and still stood at the time of the study with remnants of an autocratic state being noticeable in the governance of the country.

A handbook of experiences in Commonwealth countries highlighted quality and productivity concerns in the public sector of Malawi and changes that were taking place in 2002 (Ayeni, 2002). It is important to discuss these changes as UNIMA is part of the public sector, making

it susceptible to the same issues. The issues were, politicization of the senior ranks hampering the efficiency of bureaucratic processes; multiple, vague and sometimes conflicting public goals and objectives; confusing organizational structures due to complex multiple layers of line and staff offices with numerous administrative regulations; budget process for more staff not linked to productivity measurement data; unnecessary, obsolete and contradictory rules and regulations, old fashioned selection procedures, outdated job descriptions and unrealistic remuneration packages; little authority and autonomy in finances and personnel as compared to those in the private sector; and an inadequate system for collecting data and producing information that could be used for making decisions.

According to the handbook the following changes were commenced to tackle these issues; redefining roles of government to outsource functions not considered as part of government function; rationalizing size and growth of government employment to avoid overstaffing; job evaluation and salary restructuring; decentralization, facilitating further transfer of authority, responsibilities and resources to districts; integration of records for efficiency; introducing a framework for allocating resources in line with government policies and priorities. These approaches possess elements of the NPM reforms described in the general public governance literature. A recent study of the developments and challenges at the University of Ghana identifies weakness in institutional policies and infrastructure deficiency which advocates for development policies to consider institutional realities in the field of higher education (Abugre, 2018). That is to say that success of reforms relies largely on the improvement of the existing institutional set up.

3.5 Autonomy and Capacity in African Higher Education Governance

There have been debates on how much independence is appropriate to give universities to handle their own affairs without the state's intervention (Fumasoli et al, 2014). However, it is also acknowledged that adopting formal levels of autonomy does not necessarily result in the universities following them in practice due to institutions having different cultures, beliefs and path dependency.

“Academic studies on university autonomy have focused almost exclusively on changes in the formal governance relationship between state and universities and effects of these changes on the formal room to maneuver of universities. How these changes have been interpreted within universities and how these interpretations have

affected the internal operations, decisions making practices, organizational structures, and funding realities in universities has hardly received any attention in the academic literature.” (Fumasoli et al 2014, p1)

Gustavson (2014) argues that the idea of increasing autonomy in public institutions is an idea derived from reforms in the West and though it has been formally introduced in African reforms it may have different informal implementations due to 1, lack of capacity and 2, patrimonial structure in the African political and administrative cultures. She suggests that though there is an attempt to increase capacity in terms of resources there is still an idea that there is one “big man” in control and only those that are connected can benefit. It is the authoritarian history of the continent that promotes this ideology in most public institutions including universities. Through my experience in Malawi this is widely known as “yes *bwana*” syndrome translated as “yes *boss*” meaning there is a fear to go against what the higher authorities dictate, and bootlicking is common in exchange for favors. In connection to Gustavson’s argument, these are the remnant beliefs and fears of the single party system that was discussed in the background chapter and the need for one person to be in charge and lower level managers not being confident in executing mandates devolved or delegated to them.

In the study of NPM there is an emphasis on having the right people in charge and the importance of professionalism. Good governance is characterized by meritocratic recruitment, and professionalism as well as efficiency and effectiveness thus the need for governments to recruit, retain, reward appropriately and assure the integrity of highly skilled public officials to be more productive (Gustavson, 2014; Hope Sr, 2005). To insure this, Hope highlights the different measures that have been implemented in Africa such as introducing new grading systems based on job evaluations, performance-based pay through performance management systems, capacity building through training and promotion, and merit-based recruitment and promotion procedures. Fukuyama (2013) further proposes that good governance is having a nexus between autonomy and capacity and this was the main analytical perspective for this study. The autonomy and capacity of the College in this case were regarded as equally important. The backbone of governance in African governments can be projected to understand the governance within public higher education institutions.

3.6 Steering Models and Alternative Governance Approaches

Organizational autonomy can be viewed from the point of view of steering models and hierarchical subordination (Fumasoli et al., 2014; Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000; Cloete et al., 2005). The assumption underlying these models is that the development from state control to state supervision is to be promoted, because a supervising role of the state would lead to a better performance of higher education than a controlling role (Cloete et al., 2005). Magalhães et al. (2013) argue that though autonomy to universities and the need to increase self-governance is widely promoted, governments need to ensure that their goals are indeed being pursued and therefore there is the need for the supervisory role of the state. This implies that it would be impossible to have a completely autonomous public institution, or the concept of governance without government per se. Moving away from direct control of higher education to steering from a distance, deregulation has been accompanied by dual pressures of enhanced management performance and accountability. ‘Governments appear distrustful that deregulation and enhanced institutional autonomy will by themselves achieve desired efficiencies and objectives for higher education’ (Meek et al., 2010 p 4).

3.7 Conclusion

The literature review gives an overview on how governance can be interpreted and analyzed using different perspectives. It presents the way governance is perceived by different scholars, how it relates to new public management ideas and finally how different countries implement governance reforms in higher education institutions. One common goal of the reforms is to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the management of higher education systems. However, higher education institutions have distinct elements that distinguish them from other types of organizations. These elements are what make governance reforms complex and worth the in-depth research of higher education institutions. Table 1 summarizes the different elements and components important in higher education institutional governance reforms.

Table 1: Elements and Components of Higher Education Institutional Governance

Governance Structure	Organizational Structure	Functions
Actors Decision making Mandates Systems and Procedures	Units Departments Faculties	Primary Processes (research, teaching, service) Administration (Human Resource Management, Financial Management, Facilities, Procurement)

When determining the effectiveness of higher education institutions, most studies look at outputs such as student numbers or number of publications produced to determine their potential. Though many studies describe governance by adding another term such as good governance or cooperative governance, there have been few studies on the quality of governance in general. There have even been fewer studies with the quality of governance perspective in higher education. Fukuyama (2013) is one of the few scholars that presents the quality of governance perspective and though it is not on higher education it can be applied as a framework in the field. The framework is therefore what was used in this study and the next chapter explains the different concepts of the framework and how these were used to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

The literature review suggests that it is not conclusive on possible indicators for measuring the quality of governance, but there are some concepts that have been attributed to good governance. Two major concepts that are identified are *autonomy* and *capacity* (Fukuyama, 2013). The global idea underlying governance reforms borders on increasing autonomy to institutions, which results into the expectation of the institutions having the capacity to produce results with as little oversight as possible. The purpose of this study was not to produce evidence on the quality of governance in the College of Medicine per se, but rather to study the nature of the governance reforms in the institution as well as their implementation using the quality of governance perspective.

Fukuyama suggests that good governance can be analyzed by using a two-dimensional framework using capacity and autonomy for measuring the quality “of the executive branch” (Fukuyama, 2013: 347). He argues that quality of governance is the result of the interaction between capacity and autonomy. This perspective implies that, more, or less autonomy can be positive or negative depending on how much underlying capacity a bureaucracy has. Figure 4 shows the relationship between capacity and autonomy and the arrow is the ideal direction in which a public governance system is expected to follow for effective governance. Ideally the sweet spot is the desired situation, but it would be more beneficial for a system with low capacity to have more rules and regulation and less freedom. Conversely, if a system has high capacity and low autonomy this is expected to be less effective. The same goes for a system with low capacity and more freedom to maneuver. By looking at the trend of the relationship between autonomy and capacity we can determine whether a system is moving towards the sweet spot or away from it or is stable. Another scenario is where a system does not fall on the line at all. For example, there could be a system with high capacity but limited autonomy or low capacity with high autonomy. These two scenarios are likely to produce low quality governance according to Fukuyama.

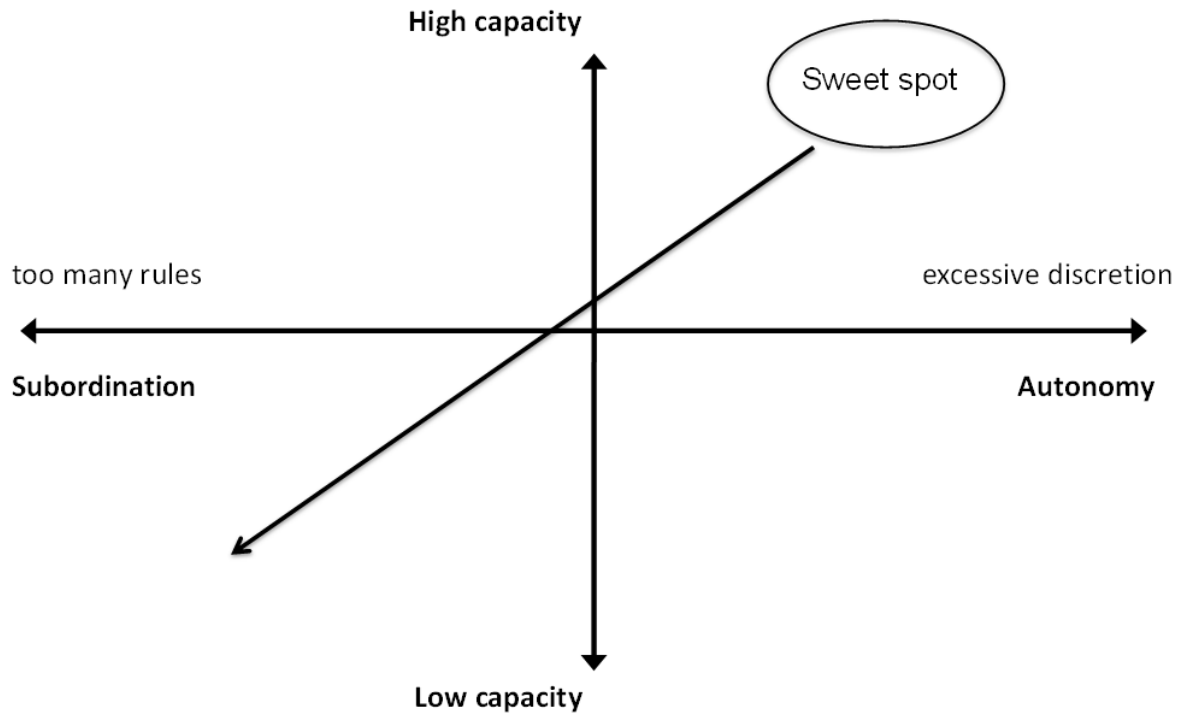


Figure 4: Relationship between autonomy and capacity (Fukuyama 2013)

Studies showed that the trend in African bureaucracies was that an increase in capacity did not coincide with an increase in autonomy (Gustavson 2014; Peters, 2001). There was more distrust in giving mandates to capable officers resulting in supposedly poor quality of governance.

4.2 Autonomy

Fukuyama (2013, p9) describes autonomy as “the manner in which the political principal issues mandates to the bureaucrats who act as its agent”. Fukuyama further expresses autonomy as the opposite of subordination. When examining the trends in the level of autonomy of COM the key notion that is being studied is the mandate that units and actors are given when making decisions. The mandate could be in the area of academic, financial, human resources decision-making and/or policy making. The following indicators were used to interpret the levels of autonomy within COM:

- Availability of formal job descriptions and mandates in decision making that were well understood by the staff members.
- Organogram and line of reporting. What reporting mechanisms were in place and who were staff members accountable to? Frequency of meetings and reports.

- Human resource policies and practices. Who is in charge of; recruitment, dismissal and appraisals and setting salary levels?
- Budget holders' mandates in use of finances and sourcing of funds

Fukuyama argues that mandates can often overlap and are sometimes contradictory. This, however, is linked to the level of capacity and such cases occur where there is low capacity.

4.3 Capacity

Good governance as discussed by Fukuyama is connected to capacity and capacity building is considered a key element of reforms to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. The significance of capacity in using the quality of governance perspective has been discussed earlier in this chapter. In relation to autonomy what is noted, according to Fukuyama (2013), is that too many mandates in a low capacity bureaucracy would not produce desirable results as they would in a bureaucracy with high capacity to manage those mandates. This section presents the conceptualization of capacity in this study. The two main levels of capacity identified are human capacity and financial capacity and these are elaborated further in the text that follows.

4.3.1 Human Capacity

Fukuyama (2013 p8) states that highly educated professionals are trusted with a higher degree of discretion and this is because, “we assume or hope that they will be guided by internal norms in cases where their behavior cannot be monitored from outside.” To analyze the human capacity of COM the following indicators were identified:

- Qualifications of administrative and academic staff
- COM staff establishment and number of administrative and academic staff numbers,
- Types of appointments for the main actors in the governance structure (whether elected or appointed).
- Training availability to build existing capacity and availability of career path after training.

4.3.2 Financial Capacity

Capacity also includes other resources and when it comes to public governance in general Fukuyama (2013) equates this to the amount of tax that can be extracted for use in other


domains. In this study the conceptualization of this was to determine the amount and source of funds generated by COM to deliver its services. The financial capacity indicators used to examine ‘good governance’ are:

- The size of the budget for COM’s strategic development (which includes the size of the budget of the administrative units at COM that are expected to support the strategic development of the college.)
- COM’s annual cash flow; (consistent or changing?)
- Source of funding, (constant or unreliable)

4.4 Analytical Model

The focus areas of study within the analytical model were the **actors, procedures and systems, policies, organizational and financial structures**. By using the framework developed by Fukuyama each research question revolved around levels of autonomy and capacity. This made it possible to tell whether autonomy and capacity in the focus areas were either both increasing or decreasing, were moving in opposite directions, or were staying stable. Fukuyama’s approach to assessing the quality of governance suggests that providing more autonomy to an institution would only be more effective and increase efficiency if coupled with high capacity. While this study was not targeted at measuring the results or outputs of the reforms, using Fukuyama’s perspective as an analytical framework, an understanding of the evolution of the governance at COM could be made. Table 2 summarizes the concepts and indicators used in the analytical framework of this study. The double-sided arrow indicates that the autonomy and capacity in COM could either be increasing, decreasing or remain stable.

Table 2: Analytical model showing main concepts and indicators of the study

Direction	Autonomy Indicators	Capacity Indicators
Increase  Stable Decrease	Formation and availability of formal job descriptions	Human Capacity – Qualifications, Staff Establishment, Academic and administrative staff numbers, staff turnover, Types of appointments, Human Resource Policies and Procedures (recruitment, discipline, promotions, training), Periodic Reports, Availability of Formal Job Descriptions.
	Formation and types of mandates in decision making and managing funds (generating and use)	
	Organogram/Hierarchy and clear reporting lines	Financial Capacity – Source of funds, size of budget for development, Consistency of annual cash flow,

4.5 Context

It is important to understand the context in which COM operated when analyzing and interpreting the findings of the study. It is in this vein that the first point of departure was formed by the general governance reforms of Malawi and how those were related to the internal University and College governance reforms. It was also important to study the different levels of authority from the upper level, middle level and lower level. As discussed earlier, once COM was transformed into a university, the middle level would become upper level authority, and this would be considered when analyzing the data concerning the middle level managers. Figure 5 illustrates the four distinct levels of authority that were considered in this study.

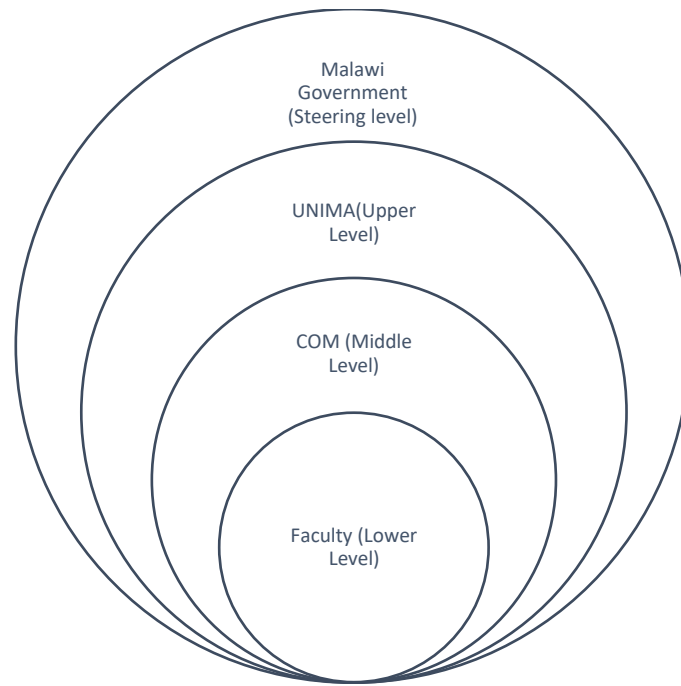


Figure 5: Levels of Authority in COM

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

For this study a qualitative methodological approach was used, in an attempt of gathering in depth understanding of selected aspects of the governance of higher education institutions in Malawi. A case study was conducted in COM which was a constituent college of UNIMA to explore the significance of the context of governance reforms through an in depth study of a singular organisation (Bryman, 2012). The study was a formative evaluation research since there was no attempt to generalise findings beyond the setting in which the evaluation took place (Patton, 2002). The findings could, however, be used to hypothesise a phenomenon in a similar setting like other colleges in UNIMA and other higher education institutions going through comparable reforms. Patton further recommends formative evaluation research to be used in studying specific solutions that have been implemented to problems that were faced with the aim to improve the process. This was appropriate for this study considering that its main purpose was to understand the reforms made in COM and contribute to improve the process of enhancing efficiency and productivity within the college by finding solutions to existing problems. Findings in this type of research are context specific heavily relying on process studies, implementation evaluations, case studies and evaluability assessments. Therefore, a qualitative approach is best used in this type of research and that is specifically why it was chosen for my study (Patton, 2002).

5.2 Unit of Analysis

A unit of analysis is the focus of study on which an analysis would be based. According to Patton (2002), the unit of analysis could be particular events, occurrences or incidents. The focus of this study is the governance reforms in COM which comprised of governance structure, organisational structure and functions. The unit of analysis for this study was therefore the COM governance reforms.

5.3 Sampling and Participant selection

UNIMA was purposively selected as a case institution because it was the oldest public university in Malawi with a rich history of reforms and was considered the flagship university of the country. Since the university had four constituent colleges it would require more time and resources to select samples in the whole university and get a thorough understanding of

the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, College of Medicine which had the reputation of doing well in its governance was selected.

The respondents were purposively sampled from both the UNIMA Central Office and COM. The Central Office was included because the Council was the overall policy making body of the University and it operated through the Central Office. My selection therefore categorised the different authority levels as top level, middle level and lower level management (Clark, 1983). The criteria for these were persons with expertise, position of authority in the university and who had served at least ten years within the university. My proposed interviewees were Vice Chancellor, University registrar, College Registrar, Principal, Dean of Postgraduate studies, the Finance Officer, Dean of one Faculty and Head of one Academic Department. The selection of interviewees from distinct categories was crucial to give a broad overview of the reforms and effects from different perspectives.

It was expected that snowballing would occur which would have led to other members of staff who may no longer be working at the university but may have crucial information. Snowballing is when a respondent refers the researcher to another respondent, who was not initially selected, but may have relevant information on the study (Bryman, 2015). This did not happen as expected as the information provided by the initial respondents was adequate for the study and there were no suggestions for further respondents provided by them. I was, however, referred to the Dean of Biomedical Sciences and other Health Professions by the Registrar's secretary when I could not get in touch with the Dean of Medicine. Although this Faculty was less than ten years old the incumbent Dean had served for over ten years and therefore still fit my criteria for interviewees and was able to provide relevant data to the study. The Vice Chancellor and the College Finance Officer were not available and were therefore not interviewed. The Head of Department was also not interviewed as by the time I reached the Dean of Faculty I had reached saturation and a repetition of themes had been identified. Rather the Assistant Registrar - Human Resource (AR-HR) and the Vice Principal were added to the respondent list. The reason for this was because the AR-HR was directly in charge of the human resource aspects and was key to the study, though it was noted that he was less than a year employed by the college. The interview with the Principal had made me seek more information from the Vice Principal who had delegated responsibilities from the Principal which had not been articulated quite clearly in the interview.

Table 3 shows the list of interviewees, their positions and codes used in the analysis.

Table 3: Interviewees, their positions and codes

Position	Level	Code
Top Management 1	University – Upper	UNI1
Top Management 2	University- Upper	UNI2
Principal	College - Middle	COM1
Registrar	College -Middle	COM2
Vice Principal	College – Middle	COM 3
PGR Dean	Faculty – Lower	COM 4
Dean of BMSHP	Faculty – Lower	COM 5
Assistant Registrar -HR	College- Middle	COM 6

**BMSHP-Biomedical Sciences and Health Professions, PGR- Postgraduate and Research, HR-Human Resource*

5.4 Data Collection and Document Review

I started my study with perusing university and college documents on proposals and strategic plans for the past decade to find information on reforms that had taken place during this period. The data that was derived from the documents were human resource policies, sources of funding, decision making models, positions and how leadership positions are obtained and, number of staff and staff establishments. The documents gave a basis for those focus areas that were central in interviews and data analysis.

To assess that the documents were appropriate for the study Scott’s criteria described in Bryman (2015) were used. That is to consider authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Authenticity is whether the author can be verified or identified and whether the document is an original or a technically sound copy. Credibility is concerned with accuracy and free from error and distortion. Representativeness whether the document represents the totally of relevant documents. Lastly, meaning refers to the ability of the researcher being

able to read and understand its linguistic form and capture what the author intended to convey. Table 4 shows the documents used and how they were accessed.

Table 4: Documents used for analysis and Access

Document	Access
COM Proposal for New University Report (2018)	COM internal circulation email
UNIMA Act 1998	UNIMA Website
UNIMA Report 2014-2016	UNIMA Website
UNIMA Calendar 2016-2018	UNIMA Website
Malawi Education Sector Performance Report (2016/17) (ESPR)	Ministry of Education
Malawi Public Sector Reforms Commission Report (2015)	Government Website
COM Staff Records	COM Central Registry
COM Strategic Plan (2010 – 2020)	COM Central Registry
COM Financial Reports 2007/08 – 2016/17	COM Finance Office
COM Financial Overview 2012	COM Finance Office
College of Medicine Concept Paper of Staff Establishment (2010)	Hard Copy from COM
Malawi National Educational Sector Plan 2008-17	Internet
Malawi Institute of Management (MIM), UNIMA Reforms Study 1997	COM Principal

All documents were examined on relevant information from 2007 to 2017. Further information on staff numbers was requested from the Ministry of Education through email, as

it was not easy to find reliable data at the college for the earlier years. Though some data was provided, most of the data was just not available at the time. It should be noted that since Malawi government was more invested in primary, secondary school and teacher training colleges, there was more data from these sectors than from higher education which was not a policy priority for the government. It was only as recently as the last 5 years that the interest in higher education had grown and data was being accumulated and recorded. The Ministry of Education had rolled out a higher education information system that was to be used to consolidate data on higher education institutions in Malawi.

5.5 Interviews

Semi structured interviews were conducted with the selected respondents. The interview guide⁶ was derived from a Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) Project that was focused on studying various organisational and governance aspects in flagship Universities of Sub-Saharan Africa. The questions were modified to reflect the research questions of this study. The questions were structured to seek the knowledge of the interviewees surrounding changes in governance that were worth noting and the status quo. In order not to lead the respondent on, the interviews were relatively open and the respondents did most of the talking. In doing so some issues which were not earlier identified were brought to my attention though this made some interviewees spend time on issues that were not in the interests of the study. The respondents were expected to have some involvement or have access to information regarding developments that were taking place in the UNIMA and COM.

The study was interested in the context of what formal and informal changes had taken place in relation to the way the college was governed. Information on systems and organisational structure was found through document analysis and discussed further in interviews. However, the interviews dwelled more on the experiences, discussions and interpretations from the actors which were not captured in documents. Personal perspectives and opinions were probed to understand the mood at the time and how the reforms were being interpreted in practice.

The interviews were recorded using a phone application and notes, written down in a notebook, were reviewed to flag out themes that made the data analysis easier. All interviews

⁶ Appendix 1

were conducted face to face in the offices of the respondents. The interview questions were not sent in advance, but a summary of the study was briefed to the interviewee when booking an appointment. I did this so that I could capture how much the interviewees were aware of the governance reforms in COM and so as not to have prepared textbook answers that would not bring out the reality of the situation. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours and were conducted between 15th January and 9th February 2018.

5.6 Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed with an online software called Go Transcript and thereafter analysed to find emerging themes to draw theoretical inferences and conclusions. The data was collected and followed six stages of analysis namely data managing, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting and representing and visualizing. First files were created in which documents and transcripts from the interviews were organised. Secondly the text was read through and notes were made in the margins to form initial codes, The next step was to describe the context of the case and then categorise the codes in themes using reoccurring patterns. It was important to capture the themes that were most relevant to the study. However, there were some recurrent themes that were not of initial interest but were taken into consideration. The findings having been classified in themes were interpreted in line with the analytical framework and what this meant for COM. An in depth presentation of the case is provided in the next chapter through narratives, figures and tables (Creswell, 2007 p156-157). Realising that the analysis would require time, the process was initiated during data collection by writing notes and establishing themes or patterns. These notes were then used when consolidating and classifying all the data collected. The most time was spent in retrieving information from the documents as there was a lot of text to review.

5.7 Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability of the study I used a clear interview guide (Appendix 1) that was objective and avoided leading questions and was based on a guide that had been used before by the HERANA Project. I also saved all the recordings, notes and transcripts of the sessions that can be analysed by a third party to verify on themes emerging. This material could be made available for audit of the findings by going through the data collected to see if the same inferences would be made, and if the research design answers the research questions. It so happened that during an interview with the College Registrar the data storage space on my

phone was insufficient resulting into only half of the interview being recorded. However, since I had written notes and highlighted the emerging themes, this was easily used in my data analysis without loss of valuable information. For external validity a thick detailed description of the steps, processes and objectives is provided (Bryman, 2015).

To ensure internal validity the method of triangulation was used, which refers to using two different methods to collect data (Bryman, 2015). Thus, data was collected from both interviews and documents. The documents used were official documents that were approved or provided by the institution and falling in line with Scott's criteria of assessment. I have also clearly clarified my biasness in the study as an administrator in the University and through the study I learnt that by being a member of staff it would have been wrong to assume that the perception of one person would represent the bigger picture. I gained a lot of information and insight that I would not have had if it were not for the study especially on the years I was not at COM, before my employment in 2011 and during my study period from 2016.

5.8 Ethical considerations

The four ethical principles to consider in research found in Bryman (2015 p125) were considered. These are that a researcher should prevent 1) harm to participants 2) lack of informed consent 3) an invasion of privacy or 4) deception. The respondents were asked whether they were comfortable to be interviewed and contribute to my study. They were then asked on a date and time they would be comfortable to meet. Most bookings were arranged through the secretaries in respect for their authority and to be as formal as possible. Before the interviews consent was sought to be recorded. The interviewees were informed that data analysis would include codes with no bio information to secure identity of respondents. There was no written consent but only verbal agreement. The respondents had a right to privacy and were free to request anonymity or refuse to answer certain questions they were not comfortable with. I believed that the study would raise issues on trust since I was an employee of the University in administration, therefore I was transparent and introduced myself accordingly as a research student, highlighted clearly the aims of the research and why they were chosen as respondents.

Another concern was that the ongoing discussions of delinking and tensions between the College and Central Office may have raised suspicions on the reasons behind the study and

may have been mistaken for a fault-finding exercise. This would have made the interviewee uncomfortable to disclose important and accurate information. Though this was a concern, I did not have any hesitation from the respondents and each one of them was open and comfortable to give honest answers. They trusted that the study would be of help to the institution and thus appreciated the importance of bringing out everything in the open.

5.9 Methodological Limitations

The study being a qualitative formative evaluation made the findings specific to COM and difficult to generalise on to the general picture of governance in higher education institutions of Malawi. The limited time and resources made it difficult to conduct an in depth comparative study. Another main challenge was the availability of data. The database of COM was more accurate at the time of the study, with COM having upgraded its records management systems. However, data earlier than 5 years back was still extremely difficult to obtain, and data was not found in one central location. The lack of formal human resource policies was another major limitation as it was difficult to determine these formal procedures without formal documents. Lastly the study was focused on senior members of staff in leadership positions. Contributions from junior academics and administrative staff would have been of benefit to get an insight into how the reforms are understood at this level and if at all there was any effect. Time and resources did not allow for further study beyond what has been presented.

CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings and analysis of data in relation to the analytical framework of the study. The data and information used for the analysis were derived from both official documents and interviews. Indicators that were used can be found in Table 2, Chapter 4 where the analytical framework is presented. The chapter uses the research questions as a structure to present the findings and analysis around each question within the analytical framework used.

6.2 Elements of UNIMA and COM governance reforms

It was introduced earlier that the recent governance reforms concerning the delinking of the UNIMA were a result of national public reforms as prescribed in the Public Service Reforms Commission Report (PSRCR) 2015. However, a document review reveals different elements of governance reforms going back to as far as 1997 when a MIM study on university reform proposed a more market-oriented type of university as a way of using the dwindling public resources more effectively⁷. This report also suggested the dissolution of the university central office and subsequent delinking of the colleges. It has already been discussed in Chapter 2 that one college, Bunda College of Agriculture, had already delinked from the university prior to the PSRCR 2015. Public higher education institutions in Malawi had since inception been given a great amount of autonomy and were taken as a parastatal of governance unlike other public education sectors. The formal head of UNIMA (the Chancellor) was the Head of State but the institution had its own governance structures that were only monitored by the Minister of Education and governed by a Council.⁸ The public-sector reforms however still had an impact on governance reforms in UNIMA and COM.

The public governance reforms in Malawi date back to when the country gained independence and there have been cycles of reforms according to the prevailing national agenda which is mostly influenced by external forces. Peters (2001) recognizes this cycle as a common trait in low income countries due to limited resources to forward local agendas.

⁷ The Malawi Institute of Management, UNIMA Reforms Study conducted in 1997, made several recommendations to how UNIMA could be more efficient and effective in its service delivery.

⁸ UNIMA ACT 1998, UNIMA Report 2014-2016

However, the overarching themes for these reforms can be summarized as follows according to the Public Service Reforms Commission Report (2015, p23):

- Human Resource Management (recruitment, selection, remuneration, reward, discipline).
- Ethics, Integrity and Work Culture.
- Size and structure, functions and operations of the Public Service.
- Professionalism of the Public Service vis a vis political interference.
- Implementation of a functional Performance Management System.
- Managing the Reform Process.
- Reviewing of critical policy documents including Acts, Regulations and Laws.
- Role of Government including mandates of individual government Ministries, Departments and Agencies.
- Decentralization.

The reforms had the input of external advisors from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank. In UNIMA the elements of public governance reforms were visible and could be categorized as follows:

- Organizational Restructuring: Functional Review (UNIMA 2014-2016 Report).
- Human Resource Reforms: Training, Performance Management System.
- Financial Restructuring: Outsourcing, Procurement procedures, student unit costs, Resource Mobilization.
- External Influence: World Bank Reports, Public Reforms, National Education Sector Policy, National Council of Higher Education.
- Review and Introduction of Policy documents; Higher Education Act and UNIMA Act, Human Resource Policy, Gender Policy, Research and Consultancy Policy.
- Improving Information Management Systems.
- Research Governance Reforms.

The reforms in UNIMA related to the suggested areas of improvement that were highlighted in both the Commonwealth handbook 2002 over 15years back and echoed in the PSRCR 2015. Furthermore, an external influence was noticed which corresponds with the factors raised in the literature review (Peters 2001, Gustavson 2014, Hope Sr 2002). However, from

COM's perspective the predominant external influence on them was the UNIMA Central office as COM could not formulate policies on its own. When asked why the college did not have a human resource policy, for example, the unanimous response was that *"all policies are formulated at Central Office"*. Thus, the overall UNIMA reforms did have a strong influence on the developments within the COM.

On an international level the College had several donor-funded programs which were linked to research and capacity building in the college which were crucial to supplement the government subvention as we will discuss later in this chapter. To keep this relationship it was vital for COM to follow globally accepted practices for legitimacy and accountability (Mehde, 2006). *"We have had internal self-evaluation and external evaluators"*⁹ was a response from one of the interviewees when asked about the reforms that had taken place over the past decade. Without explicitly mentioning the term, one top manager describes the governance vision of COM as following the New Public Management idea. The exact words used were *"we would like to be more business-like, more co-operate by generating our own resources without fully relying on government subvention."*¹⁰

Like most higher education institutions globally, COM's management was aspiring to become more entrepreneurial, adaptive and commercially responsive through strategic planning, mission articulation, evaluation and commercial marketing (Meek et al, 2010).

6.3 Changes in Institutional Governance of COM

The governance structure in UNIMA was introduced in Chapter 2 as being prescribed by the UNIMA Act 1998. The findings showed that there had been developments in the governance and organizational structure which were not reflected in the prevailing UNIMA Act 1998. Due to this, at the time of the study the Act was under review and a new Act had been drafted awaiting approval from the parliament. COM being an affiliate college of UNIMA fell under the prevailing UNIMA Act 1998 but, during the period of this study the college had already drafted a proposal for a new governance structure following the approval of its delinking from UNIMA. There was, however, no draft COM Act to determine whether the new act for the new University would be similar to the prevailing UNIMA Act, the new proposed UNIMA Act or would be totally different. It should be noted that though the UNIMA Act of

⁹ COM 1, Middle management

¹⁰ COM1, Middle management

1998 was further amended in 2011 to remove Bunda College of Agriculture, I was not able to find the published UNIMA Act with this amendment as only the UNIMA Act of 1998 was in circulation.

The findings were centered on the three main elements of institutional governance in COM that were discussed in Chapter 3.4.1. These elements are governance structure, organizational structure, and functions (refer to Table 1). The focus was on both actual reforms that had taken place and the proposed changes.

6.3.1 Governance structure

The study concentrated on the governance structure of COM considering how bureaucratic decisions were made, who the actors making these decisions were and the nature of the mandate these actors had. Also, of importance was who were responsible for giving these mandates.

6.3.1.1 Actors

The UNIMA Act 1998 was taken as ‘the Bible’ in governing UNIMA as seen in several interviewee responses stating, “...as prescribed in the act...”. Even though this was the case it was noticeable that there were some actors who are currently part of the university structure but are not included in the UNIMA Act. This showed that there were some positions and committees that were required to be added despite the Act not prescribing this and this response from top management explains this situation.

“You may not find it in the Act per se, but council has under a certain section, Section 30, allows council to create other committees which help it in governance”¹¹

This response showed that there was mandate given to the council to add actors when there was a need. The Pro-Vice Chancellor, University Estates Development Officer and Marketing and Communications Officer were some new positions introduced outside of the Act. As discussed earlier the Central Office positions were duplicated at college level as a result, each college adding a College Estates Development Officer and Marketing and Communications Officer. There was no need to add a Pro-Vice Chancellor because the Principals already had Vice Principals. What we see here is that the increase in positions at

¹¹ UN12, Top management

the university central office resulted in an increase of positions at the college level. In addition to these other administrative positions were established in COM to enhance efficiency. These were Teaching and Learning (Monitoring and Evaluation) Officer, Procurement Officer, ICT specialists, Communications and Marketing Officer, Research Support Center Director, Director of Investment and Resource Mobilization and Compliance Officer. It was also noted that the number of assistant registrars in COM had grown from one to three with each one sharing tasks under the Registrar's office.

In Chapter 2 we discussed that the colleges in UNIMA had different governance structures and therefore had different needs in actors to contribute to the quality of governance. However, they were not at liberty to use government funding to create new positions outside the approved positions by UNIMA council. In COM this was seen as a deterrent to progress and thus some new positions that were created were funded by research activities and external donors. Such positions were Marketing and Communications Office, Director of Investment and Resource Mobilization, Teaching and Learning (Monitoring and Evaluation) Officer and Director of Research Support Centre.

*'Through the appointments committee we can see gaps and create a position. The question is of where do we get funds? We cannot use government funding, so we have to find funds. That way we have been able create essential positions that are not in other colleges'*¹²

The College of Medicine had recruited new members of staff to become more efficient and effective in its service delivery. These positions, being purely administrative, increased the number of non-academic staff in the college despite UNIMA's restrictions. The global trend of an ever increasing administrative body in university governance is a trend that was described by Gornitzka & Larsen (2004). However, the new positions did not hold entirely new tasks but rather redistributed tasks from the available personnel that had heavy work load in juggling tasks of requiring different expertise. As a result, within a decade more personnel in administration, finance, procurement and information technology had been recruited. For instance, initially the office of the Registrar had been taken as a general office that handled all administrative issues including human resource management, estates management, general operations, student's welfare, academic issues, custodian of records and registration. Now these functions had been deconcentrated to lower offices with the creation of more

¹² COM 3, Middle Management

positions.¹³ It was not clear whether the initial problem was the capacity in numbers or competency of post holders or both. It follows that it was questionable as to whether the increase in number of staff would have resulted into an increase in efficiency or not.

The following presentation is on the recruitment procedure in COM. Deans of faculty and heads of departments were elected by faculty members while all other positions were appointed through open advertisements followed by interviews. One common theme that came out of the study was the need for executive deans who would be appointed through interviews as opposed to an electorate. Not only were the interviewees in support of this but it was also recommended in the proposed structure of the new university from COM. The main argument was that it was difficult for academics in management positions to take sides with the administration on certain matters because the decisions would eventually affect them as academics. Furthermore, because their leadership position was only for two years the incumbents would not want to lose favor from someone who may become their superior in future. An example was given by a UNIMA top manager:

“There are times when there is a strike and the dean hasn’t come to his own strike and the question is who is going to manage who?”¹⁴

Acquiring and maintaining human capacity had been a struggle over the years since the commencement of COM. This was due to the poor conditions for staff and failure to attract or retain them. Even though there was an effort to train staff there had always been a challenge in fulfilling the established positions and there were three main reasons highlighted. First in the year of 2010 there was a directive that the colleges should no longer hire academic staff at Bachelor’s degree level (staff associates or assistant lecturers). This was a struggle for COM because it was a young college that did not provide enough postgraduate programs to provide the required caliber of staff and was still relying on sending staff associates who come straight from undergraduate studies for further training. Only after an appeal, they were exempted from this directive. Secondly, because the college was funded by the government there was no increase in funding for a few years which led to a directive from the Council not to recruit any new members of staff and only replacements were allowed. This also meant that there was no room to increase the approved staff establishment though due to the growth

¹³ COM 3, Middle management

¹⁴ UNI2 Top Management

of the college it was deemed a necessity. One respondent¹⁵ said that there had been an active effort to promote local staff through training programs (locally and internationally) and retention schemes. He called this “*Malawianization of the staff.*” This had proven difficult due to limited funding and incentives to attract local staff. As a result senior local staff members were lost to other higher education institutions and organizations locally and internationally with better employment conditions. Another argument in addition to funding, on why the employment and retention of quality staff was difficult, was that the recruitment processes were delayed, and the promotion criteria used were demotivating with no clear succession plans. This was because staff members were usually not given more mandates on return from training and it was not easy to be promoted to higher positions.

While looking at the numbers of staff it is also important to consider what qualifications they had and their relevance to COM. By nature of the college being medical there was a great effort to train the academic staff to a level at which they could impart knowledge to future students. We note that obviously most of the qualifications were medical related and the staff had Master of Medicine degrees (MMeds) or were fellows of certain medical groups. The MMed and fellowship had been equated to a PhD and these staff members were promoted to lecturer positions. Thereafter promotion was considered on criteria such as the number of publications and service in the college. This led to the introduction of health education certificates to improve the quality of teaching. In terms of equipping members with management skills the college introduced orientation workshops for academics appointed to management positions. **Error! Reference source not found.**⁵ shows the trend of staff by position from 2013 to 2017.

Table 5: College of Medicine Academic Staff Data according to Position

Academic Staff Data from 2013 to 2017						
<i>Year/Position</i>	<i>AL</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>SL</i>	<i>AP</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Total</i>
2013	18	55	34	13	6	126
2014	10	45	34	13	5	107
2015	20	66	33	11	8	138
2016	22	71	25	9	8	135
2017	36	76	22	9	7	150

Source; College of Medicine Database and Ministry of Education

Key: AL-Assistant Lecturer, L-Lecturer, SL – Senior Lecturer, AP – Associate Professor, P- Professor

¹⁵ COM 1, Middle Management

It must be noted that I initially set out to collect data going back to 2007 but after requesting from the College, the Central Office and Ministry of Education, data from 10 years back could not easily be traced. Thus, the years covered in the table are the years I managed to find reliable data on. Although the data differed between different documents by a few numbers the trend was the same. This is true for administrative staff data which was more difficult to find than the academic staff data and thus I relied on the information from interviewees.

The importance of this data is the idea that academic staff would become deans and heads who were expected to be managers and thus part of the governance structure of the college (Meek et al., 2010). The positions in Table 5 reflect levels of qualifications. The Assistant Lecturers had a first degree, the Lecturers had a Master's degree, MMED or PhD¹⁶. Promotion to Senior Lecturer was by publications and service in managerial positions within the college. It must also be noted that most of the lectures were part time lecturers who were not eligible to take up managerial positions. For example, in 2013, 10 of the 55 lecturers were 40% part time and in 2016 there were 15 of these 40% lecturers.¹⁷ Though the number of staff was increasing, due to increase in number of programs, the number of senior staff was not increasing and there was an increase in temporary or part time staff. In terms of numbers the capacity seems to be increasing but in terms of seniority there was not much increase and it was rather decreasing which should not have been the case as there had been many who had been sent for training. However, this could also be because there was no motivation to publish and no initiative for junior staff to be mentored by senior staff. As one respondent said

“We have no succession plan. For example, we had one senior in anatomy who went on early retirement and now we have no one to replace him because we had no succession plan.”¹⁸

It was also noted that most of the staff were initially expatriates and there had been an effort to train more Malawians because expatriates who were supposed to have local staff studying under them had not delivered as expected. Rather they would come on short contracts and exchange with new expatriates when they leave causing a continuous cycle of temporary members of staff.

¹⁶ These were differentiated by the titles Lecturer 1 or Lecturer 2, though the data does not provide this differentiation

¹⁷ COM Staff Records

¹⁸ COM1, Middle Management

For the non-academic staff in the college there had been a deliberate move to prioritize training of existing administrators and recruit administrators with “relevant” requirements. I put relevant in quotes because there was a feeling from some respondents that the college still did not have relevant staff and recruitment procedures did not bring in the right people as seen in this statement.

“If I had my way I would revamp the whole administrative section, it requires a lot of revamping”¹⁹

However, this was also due to the lack of relevant programs in the country to cater to the reforms taking place. For example; it was rare to find someone with a degree in procurement or higher education management. Human resource management was also a fairly new program introduced in the country and therefore prior to the recruitment of the current human resource manager it was not a prerequisite to have a human resource qualification in order to manage human resources. A decade ago the Registrar was not required to have a Master’s degree but from 5 years ago, a lower position of Assistant Registrar required a minimum of a Master’s degree in a relevant field. There have been attempts to train individuals to improve the capacity, though funding was a limiting factor and training of academics was still a priority.

“I think the level of qualification of staff is no longer just at the basic first degree so most of them now do have at least a second degree which in a way makes decision making better because you have people who can reason with you”²⁰

“From 4 to 5 years ago we have prioritized the training of administrators.”²¹

“The (Registrar’s) unit has grown because initially it was one Registrar and one Assistant Registrar then two others were added, the Human Resource and Administration, and the number of staff under them has grown”²²

The introduction of the position of Assistant Registrar Human Resource with the pre-requisite of a specialization in human resources management was a welcome development. However,

¹⁹ COM 1, Middle Management

²⁰ COM 3, Middle Management

²¹ COM 1, Middle Management

²² COM 3, Middle Management

the Human Resources office was still under the office of the Registrar and thus had little mandate and capacity.

*“basically, we are only two specialized people in the unit...we are still looking at two or three years from now and maybe after the delinking process, things might come out clearly, separation between the HR office and the Registrar’s Office”*²³

The next section presents how mandates in making bureaucratic decisions are formulated and provided in COM.

6.3.1.2 Mandates in Decision Making in the College of Medicine

To analyze the mandates in decision making such as policy making, use of funds and other bureaucratic decisions I examined the presence of clear job descriptions as indicators that highlighted specific mandates. The officers that were interviewed had written formal job descriptions though it was apparent that the mandates and reporting lines for some were not clear to them. The job descriptions were formulated by the UNIMA Council and had not been updated with the introduction of new positions causing duplication in mandates. In term of the process of decision making concerning developments in COM nothing had changed. Though the ultimate decision maker was the Council, COM and UNIMA committees would discuss issues and make recommendations to the Council for approval. This was briefly discussed in Chapter 2 and Section 6.3.1. This caused delays in decision making as meetings could only take place when a quorum had been formed and there was a loss of resources as the colleges were not centrally located inviting the need for members to travel frequently. The involvement of committees could suggest that the university was a ‘professional bureaucracy’ where academics had a key role in decision making (Musselin, 2007).

The structure of decision making reflected an academic collegiate authority, providing mandate to the academic oligarchy to propose developments in the university and colleges (Clark, 1983). This is seen in the composition of UNIMA Council having representation of all members of UNIMA. However, one top management interviewee expressed how the three substantive positions that were appointed by the president were considered as the Council. *‘Those are what we call substantive members of council because when the president says council is dissolved it essentially dissolves these three’*²⁴ This meant that it would be the

²³ COM 6, Lower Management

²⁴ UNIMA2, Top Management

three positions that would be relieved of their duties while all the other members would remain part of the council. However, any developmental decisions would not be made until the three positions were filled again. So even though there was an inclusive composition of council the top authority remained with the three members appointed by the president.

In terms of hierarchy there were different levels of authority from top management in UNIMA to lower management in COM with each level having different mandates. The Principal was the head of the college and appointed through interviews and acted as the “*CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the institution*”²⁵ in charge of strategic planning. However, the Vice Chancellor was the “CEO” of the university and the Chairperson of council was the head of the board that governs the University and ultimately reported to the Chancellor. This showed multi levels of governance and some share of responsibility through decentralization and devolution (Harmes, 2006; Hussein, 2004) as the Principal stated “*the council devolved some of its powersI can make some decisions on behalf of the Vice Chancellor.*”²⁶

There was some confusion that came from this type of multi-level governance structure and Fukuyama (2013) stated that this could happen if more mandates were given in systems that had low capacity. The Principal was head of the college and ultimate decision maker of college affairs. However, he was an academic and leaned more towards the academic governance. The administrative governance was handled by the College Registrar who still reported to the Principal. The College Registrar however had to report to the University Registrar as well. This confusion was also seen in the job descriptions of deputies within the college. For example, the Vice Principal was given delegated tasks by the Principal but formally on his job description he was deputizing the Principal’s functions. His comment expressed this confusion, “*job descriptions of deputies just say deputize the same functions of the incumbent*”²⁷. This did not give a clear indication of one’s duties rather than to step in when the main office bearer was away or rather they just waited for tasks to be delegated.

The deans were equally confused as they knew they had to report to the Principal on academic matters and the College Registrar on administrative matters though these would sometimes be crosscutting and therefore it was not always clear who they should report to. In

²⁵ COM 1, Middle management

²⁶ COM 1, Middle management

²⁷ COM 2, Middle management

addition, their mandates were not clear as they acted more as a conduit of decisions made by faculty to the higher-level management and the other way around without having much power on making decisions on behalf of faculty. Another concern raised was that the deans were not empowered to make decisions, and this made their roles unclear. The response by a middle management interviewee highlights this as follows:

“at college level there are some things I should have let go to the deans and I provide oversight but at the moment even mundane things I’m forced to sign...and you are also not building capacity in a way because if you are not empowering people to make decisions they are always looking to the higher offices...and that also reduces accountability because there is no sense of responsibility because they leave it for someone else to do” ²⁸

This was more evident with the fact that heads of departments were budget holders, but the deans fell under the college administration budget. This was addressed in the draft proposal of the new COM university organizational and governance structure p14. (Note that directors were expected to replace the deans):

“the university will have semi-autonomous and self-funded institutes, representing multi-disciplinary research or training centers which draw unique expertise from various university schools and other local and international universities and research or training institutions.....led by directors, will be distinct cost centers with delegated powers to manage budgets”

UNIMA had been governed by committees to make decisions and what had been noted was the increase in committees and administrative staff. The composition of these committees included the same actors save one or two members discussing similar agendas. For instance, it was noted that the College of Medicine had a heads and deans committee that reported to the Academic Board which was the ultimate decision-making board in the College. The composition of the Academic board initially included heads and deans which was noted as an anomaly and was changed. Thereafter the Academic board would have to report to the Senate with most of the members of the Academic board being a part of Senate in addition to the members from other colleges within the university. This was of course to optimize consultative processes and transparency but could also be time consuming as echoed in these responses:

²⁸ COM 1 Middle management

‘We can improve in the efficiency of the approval system. There is a lot of bureaucracy. The urgency is not seen...if I had a way some of the decisions I’d leave to the college’²⁹

“the hope that is there is that the inefficiencies that were there in the federal set up would be removed and that will mean that the decision-making process would be hastened and not how it is now where you have to move from one committee to another then to central office”³⁰

The latter response suggests that an outcome of the delinking process would be an improvement in the time decisions are made. The assumption being that there would be deregulation and less bureaucracy in the mandates of the college thus increasing the level of autonomy in capable staff members. There was a sense of frustration from these responses and with a feeling that the capacity was available but there was little room to maneuver.

It was clear by the responses that mandates were not as clear and reporting lines were not well articulated in the existing documentation. Possibly this confusion had resulted into the UNIMA central office taking back some functions or rather it was an issue of distrust in the college as was the norm in most universities (Meek et al, 2010). This can be seen by the comment made by one interviewee on how he felt the autonomy status was in the college.

‘Things that were done here have been taken, maybe for good reasons, and is now being done by central office. For example, recruitment of mature entry students is now being done by a committee centrally when initially had been done at a local level and recruitment of some positions being done at the central level’³¹

This response suggests that at some point the autonomy to make decisions increased and for some reason some mandates were being adapted resulting in less autonomy.

6.3.1.3 Reports and Accountability

The absence of clear mandates and high reliance on committees made it hard to achieve adequate accountability as there was not one person or body that took responsibility of decisions and it was easy to shift blame on another person or office. In terms of reports almost all the interviewees talked about periodical reports that were submitted to various stakeholders, though I found that the only consistent reporting was in the form of the annual

²⁹ COM 1, Middle Management

³⁰ COM 6, Lower Management

³¹ COM 1, Middle Management

financial reports. The other reports were ad hoc and not consistent. On paper periodical reports were required however there were three issues noted:

- a) No one was monitoring these reports, therefore it was up to the member of staff to produce one when they felt the need or only when it was called for
- b) Staff did not know categorically and explicitly what was required in the reports. It was up to them to add what they saw was necessary. Safe to say there was no official template;
- c) Members of staff did not have well-articulated work plans, reporting lines and objectives to base reports on.

The main objectives that guided the officers in carrying out their tasks were the job description, the university strategic plan and the college strategic plan. This also affected how performance was measured. The lack of clear reporting requirements was echoed in this statement from one of the interviewees. *“There are no incentives and reporting is ad hoc. It depends on the zeal of the incumbent to produce regular reports otherwise reports are only produced when requested”*³². It was noted that the closest to regular reports were weekly meetings that would update the management on outputs and plans of different sections.

The argument was that the duplication of roles in the same hierarchy level undermined accountability and clear lines of responsibility, with adverse effects for institutional performance. Just like most world class universities, COM had maintained the traditional characteristics of internal decentralization, co-shared governance between faculty and administration and elevated level of socialization among academics while moving towards a managed professional model (Musselin, 2007). This type of model however made it difficult to hold any one person accountable for decisions and consequences thereafter because the groups given responsibility would change membership composition quite frequently.

6.3.2 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure in COM was parallel in nature with academic governance forming one side and administrative governance being the other. The administrative governance structure, however, was viewed as supporting the academic governance structure

³² COM 3, Middle Management

which was perceived as representing the core function of the college. Thus, in terms of hierarchy the college considered the academics as having more authority in deciding its objectives. This is noticed by administrators being secretaries of management meetings and acting as advisors rather than decision makers. Administrators, however, had more autonomy over operations and financial management even though the Principal, an academic, still had to approve all expenditures and operations. The academic structure comprised of Faculties, Academic departments, Research Units and program units. While on the other hand the administrative structure comprised of general administration, human resource, procurement, estate development, ICT and financial units.

One theme in COM's organizational reforms over the past decade was the increase and restructuring of the college's central organizational units, that is, faculties and departments. This also increased the number of actors in management. COM initially had one Faculty of Medicine, which meant that there was one dean. The changes that followed were in phases. Firstly, the faculty was split into two faculties; Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Biomedical Sciences and Other Health Professions. After several years a third faculty was developed called the Faculty of Public Health and Family Medicine. Noticeably there was no large change in the staff establishment but rather the existing departments had been re-arranged to fit in different Faculties.³³ The increase in faculties saw an increase in student programs and thus an increase in student intake. A concept paper written by the then Dean of Medicine in 2010 showed the need to increase the staff establishment to cater to the increased student intake. This, however, was also tied to availability of funds to accommodate new positions. Thus, it was difficult to implement the proposed establishment as we have noticed earlier. The vision of the college was that the disciplines be further distributed into seven Faculties or rather Schools³⁴. The challenge here was not only the availability of funds but also the availability of qualified personnel. In terms of physical expansion COM had already grown from having one campus to having two campuses in two different cities and several annexes dotted across the country with the hope of opening more campuses in future. This further showed the need to increase capacity to correspond with the growth. At the time there was no timeline for the realization of the vision, however, the past had shown the difficulty of filling vacant positions especially if the goal was to promote recruitment of local staff.

³³ COM1, Middle Management; COM 5, Lower Management

³⁴ COM Proposal Report 2018

Decentralization and delinking were common terms captured from the interviews and documents which had an effect on the organizational structure of COM. Decentralization was noted in the literature as being key in achieving good governance in developing countries (Hussein, 2004; Mehde, 2006). Hussein suggests that in Malawi the common form of decentralization was devolution and deconcentration. The findings of this study show UNIMA and COM displaying these changes. First with deconcentration we see workload from the central office being shared among the colleges. For example, only senior members of staff (associate professor, professor and senior members of the administrative staff), were appointed at Central Office level while junior staff were appointed at college level³⁵. We could also observe that, UNIMA had devolved powers from the government to run its finances, and human resources outside the government system. This meant that the Ministry of Education of under which UNIMA fell did not manage these operations at government level but rather gave those powers to the university. Hussein (2004) describes this as being quasi-autonomous and such institutions are known as parastatals. However, the interviewees referred to COM as being semi-autonomous in its relationship to the University Central Office. Decentralization was understood as the central office having less control and the college being allowed to make decisions without having to consult the Vice Chancellor or the Chairman of Council. We can say that the quest to delink COM from UNIMA was a form of devolution from the central office to the college since it would no longer be governed by the UNIMA central office. One respondent believed that the central office hindered a lot of progress and delinking would give them more growth and expressed that in these words; *“most of the things that were throwing us back was the red tape and processes were taking too long because you had to send things to central office and back again”*³⁶ Thus, decentralization had been a step towards increasing autonomy and the proposed delinking from UNIMA was a further step in increasing autonomy in COM.

6.3.3 Functions

The following section focuses on the functions element of COM governance which include primary processes (research, teaching, service) and administration (Human resource management, Financial management, and Procurement)

³⁵ COM1, COM 3, Middle Management

³⁶ COM 6 Lower management

6.3.3.1 Administration (Human Resource Management)

The study set out to understand the developments in human resource policies and procedures as indicators of efforts to improve the quality of governance. Every response showed that traditionally there was no human resource policy in UNIMA and that the human resource function was one of the weakest areas in the governance structure. The lack of a policy in UNIMA also meant that COM did not have a policy as it was not permitted to develop its own. The documents that were used in terms of human resource management were the UNIMA Act 1998, the conditions of service/rules and regulations, job descriptions, administrative standard operational procedures, college administrative guidelines and the UNIMA salary structure. COM had been able to secure external funding from donors to formulate a human resource policy for the UNIMA. The process would still involve all the colleges of UNIMA, but COM would be providing funding. This was so because though COM had sourced the funds it was not permitted to formulate any policies as a college. The approval of the delinking process somehow stalled this process because there would be no use to formulate policies for UNIMA if COM was to become its own university.

My findings were that over the last decade a realization of the importance of proper human resource management had dawned upon UNIMA with several reforms taking place as presented below;

1. *Job Grading Exercise:* All job descriptions were revised and graded in one salary structure. Though the exercise was done it was not implemented as the document produced was still under discussion. The current structure had 5 different salary scales which caused a lot of confusion and misunderstandings. These were Management, Clerical, Technical and Support Staff, Administrative Staff, Academic Staff and Clinical Staff. The job descriptions were also meant to be used for the new performance management system that was yet to be implemented.
2. *Revising the rules and regulations/Conditions of service;* Clerical, Technical and Support (CTS) Staff had different sets of rules and regulations from the Administrative and Academic (A and A) Staff. The revision set to have one document for all staff. The revision also acknowledged that the current documents were outdated with the A and A regulations being over 10 years old and CTS over 25 years old.

3. *Formulation and implementation of the new performance management system.* COM was yet to pilot the system in the year the study was being conducted.
4. *Production of Code of Conduct* this was implicit as only what construed as misconduct was highlighted in the Conditions of service.
5. *Formulating Human Resource Policy* -A document that would spell out all human resource matters including recruitment procedures, promotion and dismissal.
6. *Revision of the University Act* which was outdated. A revised copy of the Act was drafted but had not yet been approved.
7. *Introduction of Specialized Human Resource personnel under the Registrar's Office.* This was introduced 4 years ago. Though the office was still being improved, most of the interviewees were of the view that this office would function better as a separate unit and not as a function under the Registrar's Office.

Some of these exercises were near completion before the announcement of the delinking process and had been put on hold. Therefore, though meetings were held, and documents were produced nothing had been implemented. It was also noted that in trying to get the consultation from all stakeholders that would be affected by the reforms the process was very slow. In the literature review we see how changes can be difficult to impose in higher education institutions, amongst other things, because this is highly dependent on the actors who are able to challenge the status quo (Hayward, 2008; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Simsek & Louis, 1994).

In terms of the recruitment procedure the interviewees were conversant with the required procedures that were highlighted in the COM administrative guide though they made no reference to the document or any other document apart from the UNIMA Act 1998. However, it was noted that the prevailing practices that were noted in the responses from most of the interviewees were not explicitly stated in this Act. This reflected the absence of a clear human resource policy document. There were few differences between what was written in documents and the actual practices understood by the interviewees. This was due to changes being made by directives given from top management without changes being reflected in the official documents. Most of the procedures and systems were passed down through

institutional memory because most of the documents were outdated and policies were scattered in minutes or circulars which made them hard to trace.³⁷

Job descriptions were formulated at UNIMA central office level and had to be approved by Council. Adverts were then posted with the expectation that suitable applicants would apply. Shortlisting would be done by the involved department with the guidance of the College Registrar's Office. All middle management staff would be shortlisted at the UNIMA Central Office and interviews would involve middle managers from the other colleges. Candidates for lower management positions as mentioned earlier were elected by fellow faculty members. UNIMA Council oversaw the appointment of top management positions in the university. Support staff and academic staff below the level of associate professor were recruited at college level.

The college had just adopted using people with expertise from outside to help in the recruitment of administrative positions. For example, the Registrar gave an example of a recent appointment "*For the marketing officer, we involved an outsider because we realized that was a new job and it was a new area which we don't have in the college and we wouldn't be able to select the right candidate on our own*".³⁸ This was rarely done before and might have compromised the caliber of staff recruited. Previously the external members were from other colleges. The adjustment to include external members was expected to have a positive effect on the capacity of the college.

The study noted that according to the UNIMA Act all positions were advertised and people were required to show interest. However, for elected positions candidates could be nominated by their colleagues. Most respondents were of the view that the appointment processes were followed accordingly and were satisfied with the process. According to the elected positions it was unanimous that this was not the best way to put the right people in positions as it makes leaders fail to discipline the people who elected them. It also did not necessarily always elect the best candidate but the most popular. One respondent was skeptical about the normal recruitment processes highlighting that the recruitment was not as vigorous and thorough as would be expected. This in his opinion had compromised the cadre of staff that was entrusted with crucial decision-making positions.

³⁷ COM 2, COM 3, Middle Management

³⁸ COM 3, Middle Management

Performance management is regarded as a crucial element in the promotion of efficiency and effectiveness if staff productivity was to be monitored and accountability promoted (Hope Sr, 2002; Hope Sr, 2005; Meek et al, 2010). COM, however, was in use of a performance management system that was over 20 years old. The appraisal system was purely based on promotion. Members of staff would only be appraised if they were eligible for promotion after serving a required number of years on the post or after publishing more articles. At the time of the study a new performance management system for UNIMA had been formulated and was yet to be implemented. The delay in the implementation was also due to resistance from academic staff from the other colleges. The resistance was due to the absence of a culture of accountability and responsibility, being a situation common in developing countries that were undergoing governance reforms (Peters, 2001). Introducing the new system where regular appraisals were part and parcel of the system would expose inefficiencies and staff that are not producing expected outputs. COM was, however, willing to pilot the new system. In a system with no way of monitoring performance it was hard to measure the capabilities of the staff and it was also not easy to hold anyone accountable. *“In this office you have to have self-initiative or else nothing will be done.”*³⁹

The new performance management system was a crucial outcome of the reforms that were taking place in UNIMA and COM to improve the capacity of the institution. However, the system would not work without updated job descriptions, clear mandates and reporting structures, human resource policies and procedures and an understanding of the importance of the system. Thus, the development of all these components was crucial to the success of the performance management system in improving capacity.

6.3.3.2 Financial Management and Procurement of Non-core services

COM was funded at a relatively high level by the government. During the conception of the college the Malawi government invested a large sum of money and the college had international donors to ensure that the country had well trained doctors. This saw the college grow fast in terms of structures, programs, student numbers and staff. However, the last decade saw a decrease in funding from the government due to the establishment of new universities and other public priorities in the country. Donor funding also dwindled at some point for various reasons. The college was therefore forced to find innovative ways of raising funds. Figure 6 shows the college funding trend from 2008/09 to 2016/17 fiscal years.

³⁹ COM 3, middle management

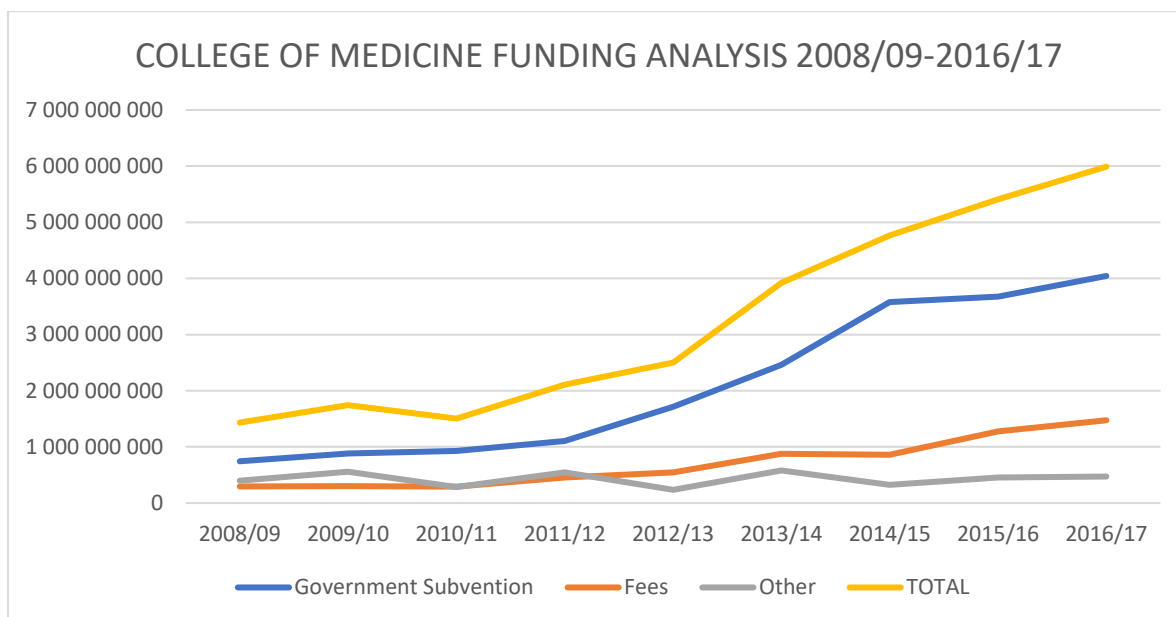


Figure 6: College of Medicine Funding development between 2008/09 -2016/17. (COM Financial Annual Reports) Currency quoted in Malawi Kwacha (MWK)⁴⁰

The figure confirms that COM heavily relied on government funds. From 2008/09 – 2011/12 the amounts of funding from various sources were not too far apart but after 2012 there was a steep adjustment in the funding from government due to increase in salaries, the growth of the college to a multi-faculty institution. After the steep increment from 2014/2015 financial year the income increased only a little per year. In terms of the amount of funding generated from fees and other income there was little increase. The funds from the government were provided for monthly and followed an approved annual budget. Budgets were generated by COM and consolidated at the university central office but once it was approved the college could use the funds with the Principal as the budget holder. 90% of the finances went to salaries with only 10% used for other operations and purchases⁴¹. Therefore, there was the advocacy of all the colleges in UNIMA, including COM to start being innovative in the way they generated income and austerity measures were adopted in its operations to maximize the use of the low level of resources available. The view of COM was that if they generated more income they would have more freedom to maneuver and this was expounded in this statement by one of the middle managers.

⁴⁰ Conversion rate MWK to 1 USD; 2008/09-2009/10: MWK140, 2010/11-2011/12: MWK150, 2012/13: MWK270, 2013/14: MWK 330, 2014/15: MWK395, 2015/16: MWK459, 2016/17: MWK715 <https://www.xe.com/>

⁴¹ COM Annual Financial Reports 2007-2017

'Since we are heavily dependent on government... we dance to the tune of government...it means you cannot remunerate or raise salaries, but if we increased our self-generated (funds) then we could do whatever we wanted' ⁴²

However, if we look at the difference between what government provided and what had been generated by the college it showed that for the college to be satisfied with its financial capacity it needed to make investments that were big enough to cover the difference. Though the government had increased its funding the total generated income had not met its budgetary requirements which saw COM constantly operating on a deficit budget. One major project that the college had just ventured in was a private clinic that had just been opened at the time of the study in the hope of increasing revenue or rather the financial capacity of the college. Funds generated through research project overheads and donor funded capacity building programs had played an important role in increasing the financial capacity of the college.

One major change noted in trying to save financial resources of the college was the implementation of outsourcing of non-core services. This was influenced by the World Bank report and its idea of this being an element of improving quality of governance (Mambo et al., 2016). The services that were outsourced were security, cleaning, landscaping and catering. Initially student accommodation and meals were provided without a charge to all students who were paying government subsidized tuition fees, but this is no longer the case. Students for the past 4 years have been paying the college for accommodation and paying for their own meals. According to the UNIMA and COM strategic plans the outsourcing was intended to create a leaner support staff structure so that there were more resources for the core functions of the university. One concern of outsourcing was that there was no staff adequately trained in managing outsourced services and thus service providers were substandard, as expressed in the following quote *"administrative staff members are not trained in management of outsourced services."* ⁴³

Hope Sr (2002) identified outsourcing as one of the elements associated with NPM and it is seen here that the implementation of NPM ideas with no capacity may not produce expected results but quite the opposite. Another reason services were poor is that the state did not have the capacity to provide the services when outsourcing was being introduced because the

⁴² COM 1, Middle Management

⁴³ COM 1, Middle Management

whole public sector had implemented this reform in line with NPM ideas. Therefore, anyone could just open a company and say they provided a service and institutions would not have much of a choice in choosing service providers. One interviewee gave an example of the low quality of the security service providers and how the capacity was limited in the country.⁴⁴ This is an example of implementing ideas that are influenced by western societies and actors without having the adequate structures to operate. The result is that these ideas are causing more problems rather than alleviating them. It was clear that there was low capacity not only in the management of the outsourced functions but also in the actual service providers. According to the data collected the capacity of providing the services that were outsourced was decreasing rather than increasing. It was still debatable whether the outsourcing was beneficial financially or not as I did not find the empirical evidence to support either position.

6.3.3.3 Research Governance

Restructuring of research governance was an important intention in connection to improving the productivity of the research related activities which in turn would elevate the college status and academic outcomes. The preceding decade saw the establishment of a Research Support Centre (RSC) to support all research activities of the College. This was unique to COM as in other colleges research functions were positioned directly under their respective faculties.⁴⁵

The RSC was established in 2006 with only the director and had grown to different units within the unit including compliance office, data management, clinical trials monitoring, scientific operations office, administrative office and training office.⁴⁶ At the time of the study the research support center had just been given an approval from the college management to implement their new strategic and business plans. The new structure allowed for more autonomy on recruiting and managing staff for research, handling finances and procurement. These functions were initially conducted by the registrar's and finance office. The idea was to let it run like a business entity while reducing the bureaucratic levels of governance that were there before.

It seemed that for COM research governance was where there was more room to maneuver and this was because the research support center was self-funded without government

⁴⁴ COM 3, Middle Management

⁴⁵ COM 4, Lower Management

⁴⁶ Staff Database, COM 4, Lower management

resources. This was argued, even though the unit was on government property and used government facilities. This being the case each research project was required to pay an overhead to cover these expenses⁴⁷. Since COM was not at liberty to change its structure and had to function through a rigid system, the reform in research governance gave them a way to get things done without going against the UNIMA Act. The argument being that the funds were self-generated. The impression I got from the interviews was that when in need of financial assistance or adding human resource these funds made it easier for things to move faster. Therefore, more energy was pumped into research governance to benefit the college and its primary processes. Giving the RSC more autonomy and capacity would be a good learning point for the college to see how effective ‘the business-like’ or, as has been discussed in the literature, the NPM model is in practice. In relation to the quality of governance perspective introduced by Fukuyama (2013) the college could enhance the RSC’s mandate due to the increase in its capacity and this could be interpreted as a direction towards the ‘sweet spot’ (see Figure 4) in terms of research governance.

6.4 Autonomy and Capacity Nexus

In trying to analyze the findings of this study I used the analytical framework presented in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4 and Table 2). The two main concepts of quality of governance as discussed in the framework were autonomy and capacity (human and financial) (Fukuyama, 2013). Table 6, summarizes the findings of this study discussed in this Chapter focusing on these two concepts. In general, the interviewees were of mixed opinion with respect to the development of the level of autonomy at COM. While some felt that there were more checks and balances and thus felt that the level of autonomy has been decreasing over the past ten years, others perceived that the autonomy had remained the same. One respondent in the lower management felt that it was difficult to increase autonomy because of politics though as they gained more qualifications they seemed to be trusted more with responsibilities. Here he agrees to some extent with the autonomy – capacity nexus conceptualization (Fukuyama, 2013), thereby suggesting that an increase in getting more qualified staff has resulted into more trust in their capabilities however these was informal, and no formal mandates were given.

⁴⁷ Financial Overview ,2012

However, through my findings I could sense the frustrations of the staff members with the rigid and archaic rules and procedures of UNIMA. The lack of room to maneuver was perceived as a deterrent to growth of autonomy within COM because policies and procedures could not be changed at college level. The literature review and document analysis suggested that the reforms had increased autonomy due to decentralization taking place, putting colleges in charge of their own financial and human resources. The mandate given to the Principal was enhanced in the sense that he could act on behalf of the Vice Chancellor. However, shifting all management tasks and functions to the colleges would have rendered the central office redundant and therefore though decentralization was a key element of the reforms the result was deconcentration rather than devolution (Hussein, 2004). Therefore, although theoretically the level of autonomy at COM had increased through a shift of authority from UNIMA's Central Office to the college, there were responsibilities that remained with the central office that COM would have desired to have been given. This resulted into little influence on autonomy in practice within the college. COM had trained and invested in members of staff in management however did not have the authority to issue appropriate mandates towards the increase in capacity of these staff. The area in which more autonomy was given was in research governance. The delinking was a major reform that was expected to increase the autonomy to other units of the college

The academic collegial model (Clark, 1983) and reliance on committees were still a practice within COM at the time of the study with little change of mandates to any single office. It was also the hope that building management capacity in COM would allow for the development of a middle management, who would eventually become top managers. An element of this was to give more mandates to the lower managers relieving heavy workloads off single offices while trusting in the decisions made at a lower level. As we have discussed earlier unless policies and procedures were updated and formalized it would be difficult to justify giving more freedom to responsible staff. What would they use to exercise their mandates? Furthermore, to echo what Peters (2001) expresses it would be important to grow a culture that values the importance of accountability and legitimacy.

In line with the analytical framework the main findings were that there was an effort to increase the human and financial capacity in several ways including training and income generating activities. However, this was a challenge which was linked to the limited autonomy and the hope that with the delinking of the university there would be less barriers

in increasing capacity as expressed here; *“it does provide a window even to say what sort of academic institution we want to be? Administratively, academically, research wise, the students that we want it can also help in resource mobilization”*⁴⁸

Even with such optimistic statements, looking at Figure Figure 66 the numbers do not look like there has been such a large growth in income to support salaries and training of several more staff especially at management positions. The zeal to increase capacity had been shown through the introduction of other positions using self-generated funds with less hustle and opposition unlike the difficulty faced in the recruitment of substantive posts. The financial trends on self-generated funds were, however, only gradual increments per year.

From the quality of governance perspective, the research governance in COM seemed to be going towards the sweet spot described by Fukuyama (2013). On the other hand, the direction of COM in general did not reflect this. The autonomy in relation to the university was on the verge of increasing drastically, at least on paper. However, within the institution the autonomy had not changed, and this is noticed by the concentrated authority on committees and middle management (COM top management)⁴⁹. The college did not have the mandate to devolve duties to lower management, but lower management were also not all of the best calibre to handle such autonomy as seen in the findings. This showed the lack of capacity to implement the intended changes.

The human resource management is a very important aspect of university governance and failure to have policies and updated standard operating procedures in this area was a serious concern. Even though there had been progress in proposing and discussing reforms I would say that the increase in capacity was gradual. The responses from the college seemed to suggest that if given more autonomy they would have implemented all the proposed reforms but the lack of mandate to formulate any policies left them vulnerable to the inefficiencies of the overall UNIMA system. Therefore, the delinking would mean that COM would then be able to formulate its own policies and procedures.

6.5 Conclusion

The governance reforms in the COM were not radical or revolutionary but they rather had been taking place gradually alongside and embedded in the UNIMA and Malawi Government

⁴⁸ COM 1, Middle Management

⁴⁹COM central administration

public governance reforms. The main objectives of the overall reforms were to enhance productivity through efficiency and effectiveness. The reforms had elements that reflected the global New Public Management agenda, with the bulk of them taking place throughout the last decade, as covered by this study. The COM strategic plan of 2010 had objectives set for 2020 and by the time of the study a large part of these objectives had been achieved. The main challenges in achieving these objectives concerned the ability to make policies as a college due to it falling under the UNIMA Act 1998. Though UNIMA had taken steps towards updating human resource policies and constitutional documents, the coordination between four different colleges made it difficult to implement the reforms in a timely manner. It was because of these bureaucracies that the colleges proposed to delink from UNIMA and each other and form separate universities with adequate institutional autonomy to run their own operations. With reference to Fukuyama's framework the sweet spot (refer to Figure 4: Relationship between autonomy and capacity (Fukuyama 2013) Figure 4, Chapter 4) of quality of governance does not coincide with complete autonomy and it would be naive to believe that a public university would have complete autonomy. Therefore, the expectations were for a more coordinating type of authority instead of a controlling type with the new university having more academic and administrative room to manoeuvre.

By looking at the goals of expansion and the faculties turning into schools, it could be tempting for the new university to move into the same bureaucratic practices identified with UNIMA's central office that they were trying to escape from by delinking. If the faculties do not have the capacity required would it still be effective to grant them more autonomy in decision making? Or does the central administration of COM have the capacity required for a university?

We can conclude that the lack of clear human resource policies would also have an effect of the legitimacy of recruitment procedures and thus make the capacity of the available staff questionable. The responses overall seemed to suggest that the delinking would give more autonomy and it is this autonomy that would give the college room to increase capacity through resource mobilization, incentives and formulation of clear human resource policies and guidelines. That is by generating their own resources and being able to create necessary positions without opposition.

Table 6: Summary of findings within Analytical Framework

Direction	Autonomy Indicators	Capacity Indicators
<p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Stable</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Formation and availability of formal job descriptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Formed at UNIMA level</i> ➤ <i>Stable, New Job Descriptions not yet approved,</i> 	<p>Human Capacity –</p> <p>Qualifications, Staff Establishment, Academic and administrative staff numbers, staff turnover, Types of appointments, Human Resource Policies and Procedures (recruitment, discipline, promotions, training), Periodic Reports, Availability of Formal Job Descriptions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Admin Staff increasing, Academic staff increasing but no increase in qualifications</i> ➤ <i>No Human resource policies; recruitments though following a set of procedures not very reliable without HR policies.</i> ➤ <i>Performance Management outdated, not consistent. New system ready for implementation.</i> ➤ <i>Reporting not regular</i> ➤ <i>Training available but no retention</i>
	<p>Formation and types of mandates in decision making and managing funds (generating and use)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Mandates informal, no formal increase in mandates, mandates increasing with committees,</i> ➤ <i>Increase autonomy in fund generation and use of generated funds.</i> 	
	<p>Organogram/Hierarchy and clear reporting lines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Decrease, with increase in positions less clear reporting lines, without approved JDs</i> 	<p>Financial Capacity –</p> <p>Source of funds, size of budget for development, Consistency of annual cash flow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Funding predominately from government which is stable but insufficient for reforms,</i> ➤ <i>Funds for developments mostly from other sources but is minimal and not increasing. For instance hiring new staff and introducing human resource policies.</i>

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Discussion

The main research questions that I set out to answer were focused on the governance reforms in one college of UNIMA, the College of Medicine (COM). To address the overall research problem stated earlier the study was set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the main elements of the University of Malawi governance reforms in the last decade?
2. What are the main changes in the governance structure following the governance reforms?
3. How can the changes in the governance structure of COM be interpreted from a quality of governance perspective?

In the following sections I will present the answers deriving from this study's findings to each of the three research questions.

In the following sections I will present the answers deriving from this study's findings to each of the three research questions.

7.1.1 What are the main elements of the University of Malawi governance reforms in the last decade?

According to the findings of this study UNIMA reforms are partially a result of pressure from internal and external stakeholders to be more efficient and effective. The government has a responsibility to ensure that the quality of public services is high and that the tax payers are indeed getting their value for money (UNDP 2011; Mehde, 2006; Peters, 2001). Such reforms to increase effectiveness have been discussed as New Public Management as a new form of governance (Osborne, 2006; Hope Sr, 2005). We have seen that public university reforms of the last decades are a reflection of the broader New Public Management ideas (Christensen, 2011).

The aim of this part of the study was to find the elements of the UNIMA reforms and how those relate to the understanding of the university governance trends and theories. From the findings what is noted is that the University has had pressure to make changes in its governance system due to an increase in intake, dwindling resources and general public-

sector reforms. The comparison between the elements of NPM introduced in the literature review (Hope Sr, 2005) and the elements found in both the Public-Sector reforms of Malawi and UNIMA were comparable. COM itself had a vision of being governed like a profit-making organization alluding to the fact that this was the future of public governance and would bring effectiveness and efficiency into COM. At the time due to being a part of UNIMA they were limited and had put in more energy in the research aspect of governance and improving internal operations such as IT and financial management. The main elements of the reform could be summarized as; Organizational restructuring, human resource reforms, financial restructuring, external influence, review and introduction of policy documents, improving information management systems and research governance reforms.

7.1.2 What are the main changes in the governance and organizational structure of COM following the UNIMA and national governance reforms?

The situation in UNIMA is that there had been major reforms in the early 1990s due to the decrease in funding from external donors and the introduction of fees in the university. The economic crisis also saw most staff leaving the university. The reforms eventually slowed down and over the years the university has had to find ways of coping with the economic status quo. Fast forward to the beginning of the 21st Century, there was a sudden new interest from the World Bank to invest in Higher Education and proposals were made for reforms in the higher education institutions. Even then there was little change or rather little motivation to change. However, COM was a new college and was established during a period where the notion of professional management was new and just before the nation became democratic. This gave it a different view on governing in a higher education institution with more freedom than the other colleges previously had.

The last decade has seen more reforms taking place in UNIMA than in any other period with changes influenced by the public-sector reforms promoting changes in COM. Other change drivers have been the establishment of more universities, increasing competition and the establishment of the NCHE which was a quality assurance agency. Thus, proposed changes in the governance and organizational structure of COM included human resource management, reviewing and formulating new policies, outsourcing, use of information management systems, staffing and financial management. Though most of these changes had not been implemented the need for change was clear as the current governance policies and procedures had been outdated. Ultimately, all the colleges felt UNIMA's central office was

delaying necessary reforms, and therefore they opted to become separate universities, which was approved as a public-sector reform. The delinking process had commenced with draft proposals of the new university governance and organizational structure. Once finalized the delinking of COM from UNIMA was expected to achieve the goals of the public sector reforms in the new university created. The faculties within COM had been restructured from one faculty to three faculties and the research support center was restructured to have more autonomy in managing its resources to improve the quality of governance in the research function of COM.

Outsourcing services that did not belong to the core function of the university was a major reform that saw downsizing of support staff and the need for management of outsourced services. In terms of capacity there was an attempt to build human capacity through reviewing the human resource management approach of the university. This was to be realized by formulating clear policies and procedures, clear job descriptions and having training plans for staff. COM had not been able to retain most of the senior (professionally) academic local staff due to lack of funding and incentives which resulted into COM having more temporary junior and international staff... The number of administrative staff on the other hand was increasing with more qualified personnel being employed though there was room for improvement to provide more skills through further training or to use better recruitment measures

Financially the college consciously formed and restructured units that were expected to increase resource mobilization. The research support center was one of them. Other income-generating activities included introduction of a (private) clinic, establishment of a medical laboratory and providing mortuary services at economic fees. Further to that students were required to pay for tuition and accommodation fees while needy students would have to apply for a loan from a separate agency. The increase in fees was minimal but more regular in the past decade though the society was not as accommodating to accept these changes. The view was in line with that of Gustavson (2014) and Hope Sr (2002) that the nation was not economically ready to adopt the NPM ideologies which promoted commercializing public services as it was perceived as benefitting the wealthier portion of the society. The findings of COM finances present that the amount of revenue collected from tuition fees was very low and due to being a public service provider there was a limitation of setting fees at an

economic rate in light of the country's poor economic situation. Therefore it was not optimistic to rely on fees to sustain the college.

7.1.3 How can the changes in the governance and organizational structure of COM be interpreted from a quality of governance perspective?

The quality of governance has been operationalized in this study by using Fukuyama's autonomy – capacity nexus. The idea being that ideally the more capacity an institution has the more autonomy it should be granted (Fukuyama, 2013). The findings of this study show that there was some effort to strengthen the autonomy of the colleges. The university already had a quasi-autonomous position in the public sector operating as a parastatal with its own human resource management and financial systems but was governed by Council with the substantive members appointed by government. However, the authority distribution autonomy between UNIMA's Central Office and COM seemed to fluctuate over the years with functions being devolved to the college and then taken away again. The findings further showed confusion in mandates and reporting lines from decision making staff. The lack of clear written guidelines and outdated documents made COM operate on more of institutional memory or path dependency than explicitly written policies. This made it difficult for the college to further extend mandates to lower management and thus limiting the autonomy in lower managerial sections.

In terms of capacity the overall staff numbers had increased but the number of highly qualified members of staff had not increased. There was a feeling though that if given more autonomy there would be more room to invest in the required personnel to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. However, looking at the amount of resources used annually against what was generated by the college, COM would still be heavily funded by the government. The question would be how much autonomy would the government give the new university to implement its proposed plans?

In relation to quality of governance an interpretation of the governance situation at COM at the time of the study can be made. First, the importance of the quality of governance had increased and thus reforms had been made or proposed in this area. The autonomy of COM from UNIMA had fluctuated with COM having more autonomy during the first decade and less autonomy during the last decade. The highest levels of autonomy the college had were in the areas of research governance, hiring of junior staff and curriculum formulation. The

university had a high level of autonomy from government apart from matters that had a direct consequence on the society such as fees or increase in salaries. However, within the college there was little change in the level of autonomy of lower managerial offices. The capacity had slightly increased though most specialized positions were hard to fill with qualified personnel, and training of staff was limited.

The performance of COM was hard to measure with the lack of clear performance indicators and reporting systems. The reforms being proposed reflected an overhaul of UNIMA and this could not be an indication of the presence of good governance or good quality of governance. Thus, the reforms were intended to improve governance or effectiveness and efficiency, and this was echoed throughout the study. One interesting aspect, however, is the view from COM that more autonomy by delinking from UNIMA would increase capacity where Fukuyama's (2013) argument was quite the opposite that more capacity would normally warrant more autonomy. However, if the capacity did increase COM was willing to increase the autonomy of lower level managers by giving them more formal mandates. The current lower level managers would at the time become middle level managers when the current middle managers became top managers of the new university. The findings show that the college was advocating for this change. There was an increase in administrative staff to increase capacity but without the mandates to make certain decisions. Following, Fukuyama (2013) it might be argued that the increase in capacity without increase in autonomy may not have resulted in a positive influence on the quality of governance as expected.

7.2 Conclusion

Introducing NPM reforms is a global trend with respect to public governance and public administration. It suggests that the best way for a public sector or institution to be more efficient and effective is by adopting management styles from the private sector into the public sector. Widely accepted in the western world as the way to go, developing countries, such as Malawi, have not been left behind in following the global NPM trends. The higher education sector is one of the sectors that has been affected by these trends. This study therefore set out to understand the reforms in the University of Malawi, the oldest university in Malawi, and how they relate to international governance reform trends. The university comprises of four different colleges, and one college, the College of Medicine (COM), was selected as a case institution for this study.

The analysis was done by using a framework inspired by Fukuyama that focuses on the relationship between autonomy and capacity from a quality of governance perspective. Data for this study was collected through document analysis and interviews with an emphasis on the reforms over the preceding decade. The findings show that the COM reforms were influenced by the New Public Management ideas. There was a desire for increased autonomy that would give the freedom to increase capacity which in turn was expected to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The UNIMA delinking process was taken as a positive development to achieve the goals of the college even though UNIMA's central office had reservations on the impact of delinking. The following response from a middle manager in COM shows a realization to what could be lost and possibly highlighting the concerns of the central office while being optimistic about the future;

*“...at the same time, we might lose oversight because some of the systems that have been developed over time over 52 years of the university we might lose them...but we still think it will propel the college into a bigger institution”*⁵⁰

The conclusion is that there was a visible effort to move towards more effective and efficient governance by trying to implement global NPM ideas. Though the term was not explicitly used the elements of the reforms all pointed towards this trend. The underlying assumption was that increased autonomy for the college would make it more productive and in turn increase capacity. My concern though was how soon the capacity would increase to match the increased autonomy. If the trend of low capacity continued with increased autonomy it might result into an opposite outcome to the expectations. I would say that UNIMA was in a destabilized state as would be common during the process of reforms because during transition periods two systems usually operate at the same time. This is due to the adaptation and resistance that was likely to occur. This resulted in a lot of uncertainty and confusion about the future of the college from the staff, but the hope was that once the new systems were institutionalized and accepted as a norm COM was likely to improve in its quality of governance with a potential to produce desired outcomes. The major challenge would be on self-sustainability in terms of financial capacity. By looking at the findings from a quality of governance perspective COM seems to have potential to reach the ‘sweet spot’ referred to by Fukuyama (2013) although the increase in capacity was gradual there was still more room for improvement especially in formalizing the management of human resources to attain and

⁵⁰ COM1 Middle management

retain the human capacity. At the time of the study COM had a relatively low level of autonomy overall, which seemed to be have been decreasing. This was due to unclear human resource procedures and policies resulting into increased capacity within COM staff members not being utilized as most mandates remained with the middle and top management. As much as most staff members would get an increase in delegated responsibilities this was informal and not necessarily a change in their mandates.

7.3 Recommendations

The study showed that the areas to be addressed were well known by management of COM, but it was the implementation that had been a problem. One main area that needed improvement to achieve high quality of governance was the human resource management, especially its procedures and policies. This I would suggest being a priority in the formulation of the new university. The contradictions in mandates and reporting lines were to be addressed by clear job descriptions. The introduction of the resource mobilization director confirms that to sustain developments in COM there was a need to find other means of generating money as the current income generating activities did not prove to be sufficient. The study was to be taken as a wakeup call to the actual state of the college and the findings should give a picture of what outcomes to expect. It was important for the college to distinguish decentralization or delinking being an effect of the reforms from being a reform in itself. The study shows that looking at delinking as the final goal without analyzing other factors such as levels of autonomy and capacity would most likely not produce the expected results.

This was only a start to the study of governance in the Malawi public higher education system. Further studies could include a comparison with other public universities and colleges. It would be a good starting point to study the change in quality of governance, if any at all, of LUANAR after it delinked from the UNIMA using the same conceptual framework provided by Fukuyama (2013). I would further suggest that when adopting policies or procedures from other universities/organizations internally or externally there should be a thorough research on their underlying conditions as it may not yield the same results.

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Appendix 1

QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWEES

Reforms

1. What major changes have been made in the organization governance model over the past ten years? In relation to the University and Government?
2. What were the reasons for these changes?
3. In relation to strategic plans? Are these reforms reflected in the strategic plans? How do they relate to the University plans?

Capacity

1. When was your unit established? How is it organized?
2. How has your unit's capacity developed over the last ten years?
3. How detailed are your human resource policies as a college/university?
4. When it comes to the two most recent staff appointments in your unit, were formal job descriptions used in the recruitment process? Were there formal announcements used in both cases? (Job descriptions)
5. What is the recruitment procedure and who are involved both within and outside the unit? How are the actors involved?
6. Are formal academic degrees/diplomas / qualifications required in the recruitment of staff for your unit? In what way are they important (is it for all positions or certain positions). What other requirement are necessary? (work experience?)
7. Is your position appointed through interviews or an elected position?
8. Does the university have a training program for training and upgrading the current staff members in administration units such as yours? Does your unit have such a program?
9. To what extent is your unit similar or dissimilar when it comes to its organization and staff structure?
10. What are the main outputs that your unit produces (annual reports, activity report etc.?) Who does your unit report to? How often and how detailed does it have to report?
11. In your opinion does the college administrative unit have the right personnel according to qualification and experience? Explain.

Autonomy

1. In your opinion did the overall institutional autonomy of your university increase, stay stable or decrease over the last 10 years?
2. In your opinion, did the overall autonomy of your unit/college increase, stay stable or decrease over the last 10 years?
3. How specific and formalized is mandate of your unit? Can you provide us with the written mandate of your unit?
4. Who has determined the formal mandate of your unit? Is it the central leadership of your university, is it coming from the outside (e.g. the Ministry of Education), or is another actor responsible? When was the original mandate formulated? When was the mandate renewed for the first time?
5. Within the areas and tasks that fall within your mandate, in your opinion, in which areas (with respect to which tasks) is your unit most autonomous (that is, where is the room to maneuver)?
6. Can your unit formulate job advertisements for new staff and job descriptions for its own staff or does the responsibility for this lie outside your unit?
7. Can you employ and dismiss staff?
8. Does your unit receive lump sum budget or are you operating based on an earmarked/line item budget? Explain more, who determines how funds are used?
9. Where are funds sourced from?
10. Does the college own land, buildings, cars and assets of its own?
11. When it comes to your day to day tasks and activities, do you have the freedom to decide yourself about the way to perform your tasks or is it prescribed externally /from someone else in the university?
12. Who do you personally report to with respect to your own work activities; how often and how detailed do you have to report?

Improvements if any

1. What areas do you feel need improvement in terms of autonomy (mandate,)?
2. What areas do you feel need improvement in terms of capacity (human and financial)?