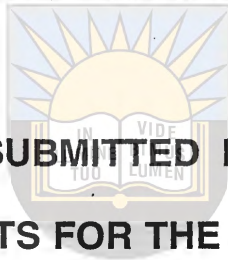


**AN ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES
IN THE PROVISION OF WATER IN MALAWI: THE CASE STUDY
OF BLANTYRE WATER BOARD**

BY

GRACE PRECIOUS KASAMIRA KHOMBA



**MINI-DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE FACULTY OF
MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE, SPMD, DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

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COMPLETED: MAY, 2011

DECLARATION

I, Grace Precious Kasamira Khomba, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation submitted to the University of Fort Hare for the Degree of Masters in Public Administration has never been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that this is my own work in design and execution and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signed.....



Date.....



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late mother Esther Kasamira, with whom I lived for only the first six years of my life but I still cherishes her love and tender care vividly. To my late brother Medson, who wanted me to be educated up to the highest level. To my father Ernest Kasamira, who has always been there for me, no matter what and to my exquisitely beautiful children Khama and Bongani Khomba for their understanding and endurance during my absence and for being my motivators as the more I have to respond to their needs, the more encouraged I am to take my career to another level.



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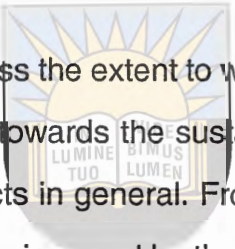
Acknowledgements are due to:

- Above them all, to God Almighty, Alpha and Omega, His grace was, is and shall ever be enough in everything I do. Thank you God for the strength, wisdom and courage to pursue my dreams;
- All my family members for their constant support, love, immense encouragements and contributions. I believe that I am, because they are, and together we can make a difference;
- To Prof. S. Buthelezi, my supervisor and Prof. M.H. Kanyane, co-supervisor for their mentorship, support and patience throughout this project.
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ABSTRACT

The key focus of this study is the assessment of the effectiveness of public participation strategies in the provision of water in Malawi, through the case study of the Blantyre Water Board (BWB). After a thorough literature review, it has been noted that this is the first research of its kind in the analysis of public participation as a social problem facing water users in Malawi. The provision of water is a basic right for every citizen and it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that each and every Malawian has access to clean water. This being the case, it is also a constitutional right for every citizen to participate in the water related activities and decisions affecting them. It is also the responsibility of water utilities to allow water users access to information as only an informed public is able to make informed decisions regarding their needs.



This research aimed to assess the extent to which the BWB public participation strategies have contributed towards the sustainability of public involvement in water programmes or projects in general. From the findings, it was noted that the public participation strategies used by the BWB have not contributed to the sustainability of the water projects. It was further revealed that there is not much public involvement taking place between the BWB and its beneficiaries which has created an obvious gap, as per the findings. The research also aimed to identify major challenges affecting public participation in the provision of water in the Blantyre City Assembly in Malawi. It was noted, from the respondents' responses that the major challenges are poor management and administrative styles; political interference and lack of community sensitization. It would be advisable for the BWB to take cognizance of the results and concerns of this study in an effort to improve and ensure effective service delivery as stipulated in the Malawi National Water Policy which is a guiding policy framework for all water utilities.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BWB	-	Blantyre Water Board
CAMA	-	Consumer Association of Malawi
DANCED	-	Danish Co-operation for Environment and Development
DFID	-	Department for International Development
IAP2	-	International Association of Public Participation
LWB	-	Lilongwe Water Board
MNWP	-	Malawi National Water Policy
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MCCCI	-	Malawi Chamber of Commerce and Confederation Industry
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MoiWD	-	Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development
NGOs	-	Non Governmental Organizations
NRWB	-	Northern Region Water Board
PDT	-	Participatory Democracy Theory
PSP	-	Private Sector Participation
UFH	-	University of Fort Hare
WUAs	-	Water Users' Associations
WSSD	-	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WFD	-	Water Framework Directive
WWA	-	Water Works Act
TPP	-	Traditional Public Participation
SPMD	-	School of Public Management and Development
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL ORIENTATION

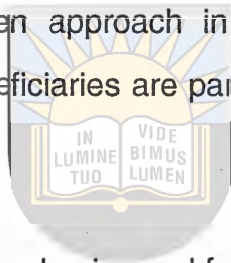
1.1 Introduction

The Blantyre Water Board (BWB), situated in the southern part of Malawi, is in the main commercial city called Blantyre City Assembly and was established in 1929. The Blantyre Water Board is the largest of five (5) wholly government owned water boards in Malawi, namely: the Lilongwe Water Board, the Southern Region Water Board, the Central Region Water Board and the Northern Region Water Board. The Blantyre Water Board is mandated under the Water Works Act No. 17 of 1995 (WWA, 1995) to “supply potable water for commercial, industrial and domestic use to the Blantyre water supply area comprising Blantyre City and defined surrounding rural environs covering a total area of 76,000 hectares” (WWA, 1995: 7).

The Blantyre Water Board, in its effort to supply water to all its consumers, is also guided by its Mission Statement which states that “it shall endeavour to provide adequate supply of wholesome water and sanitation and quality services to all customers in an efficient and effective manner while being environmentally conscious and friendly” (BWB Strategic Plan, 2007: 12). In addition to this vision, the Blantyre Water Board’s core values are “to be quality and result-driven in a bid to exceed customer expectations through the adoption of concepts of empowerment and engagement which underpin the Mission Statement” (BWB Strategy Doc, 2006:4). The BWB’s water supply area is comprised of Blantyre City with an urban population estimated at 40,000 (National Statistical Office, 2002: 14). Based on the results of the 1998 Population and Housing Census, Blantyre City Assembly has a growth rate of 3.3 percent. Approximately 70 percent of the total population has access to potable/piped water while 30 percent uses other sources of water (BWB Annual Report, 2007: 23).

1.2 Background to the study

The Blantyre Water Board (BWB), which falls under the Malawi Government's Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development (MoIWD), is guided by the Malawi National Water Policy (MWNWP) and the water policy mandates that all water boards use a participatory approach when implementing its water activities or water projects. Whether the Blantyre Water Board adheres to this mandate is an issue which is yet to be reviewed and researched in this research study. According to the Malawi National Water Policy, a 'participatory approach' is defined as a demand -driven approach in which all stakeholders and, in particular, the envisaged beneficiaries are part of the decision-making process" (MWNWP, 2005: vii).



Globally, water is regarded as a basic need for all human-kind and the provision of water is an essential developmental practice and development cannot prevail without the participation of the public, especially in these democratic days where developments are supposed to be demand-driven (Creighton, 2005: 10). This is also echoed in principle 10 of the Rio Declaration of the Aarhus Convention on the mechanisms for public participation and access to information which states that:

"Public participation is an essential part of human growth that is the development of self-confidence, pride, initiative, responsibility and cooperation. Without such development within the people themselves, all efforts to alleviate their poverty will be immensely more difficult, if not impossible. Through the public participatory process people learn to take charge of their own lives and solve their own problems (Lee and Abbot, 2003: 95).

Historically, public participation was not possible in Malawi under the tight control of the one political regime of 1964-1994. The heavily restricted access to information under the auspices of the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act (1966) made the development of a robust civil society even more difficult.

This Act empowered the Government to decide what people could hear, watch, talk about and listen to (Patel and Svasand, 2007: 361). The political atmosphere that prevailed during that period curtailed fundamental freedoms and human rights, created a culture of fear, secrecy, suspicion, silence and obedience to authority. This meant that Malawians were afraid to participate in public institutions' allocation of social resources (service delivery activities) (Patel and Svasand, 2007: 362).

Chinsinga (2007: 90) points out that since the 1990s, countries have been adopting decentralization as a vehicle for good governance, development and poverty reduction. In Malawi, democratization was heralded by the emergence of multiparty politics in 1994 which brought to an end the 31 years of the one-party system of government. The shift to this system of government created the need to bring government closer to the people. The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, Chapter IV of 1996, upholds human rights, freedoms and participatory democracy as the vehicles of real transformation. This underlines the need for people to be at the centre in driving programmes affecting their lives (Malawi Constitution, 1996). Reforms in Malawi, leading to good governance, are thus seen as providing a structural arrangement through which the local people, communities and other stakeholders can participate in service delivery (Chinsinga, 2007: 90).

Despite the reforms in Malawi as a nation and the adoption of a participatory approach to developmental activities, the management of water supply by most water boards, the Blantyre Water Board included, still faces a lot of challenges which include non-payment of water bills by the public, vandalism and the theft of water pipes, non-reporting of burst pipes, rejection of water projects by the communities and some stakeholders, demonstrations and protests on poor water service delivery, among others (BWB Strategy Doc, 2006: 4).

It is against this background and with the challenges mentioned above, that this research intends to explore the effectiveness of the Blantyre Water Board's public participation strategies and perception of its stakeholders in the provision of water supply. The study will be undertaken on the premise that the public participation strategies by the Blantyre Water Board have a bearing on the quality of water service delivery in Blantyre City and its supply environs.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The Blantyre Water Board (BWB) uses several public participation strategies in order to reach out to the people. Some of these strategies are consultation and the provision of information through radio and print media. The Blantyre Water Board was also decentralised into Zone offices in areas closer to the townships in order for water users to have access to the needed information and pay-points. A Kiosk Management Unit was also established in order to cater for the needs of low-income areas (BWB Water and Sanitation Strategy, 2006: 3).

Despite these strategies, the study fundamentally argues that there is a gap between the Blantyre Water Board (BWB) and the public it supplies water to. The gap is evidenced by the social challenges faced by the Blantyre Water Board. Some of these are illegal connections as reported in the Blantyre Water Board Annual Report (2007: 18) where it is stated that 753 illegal connections were uncovered in 2007 and this represented an increase of 49 percent compared to the previous financial year (2006). The Blantyre Water Board Strategy Document for the Provision of Water and Sanitation (2006: 6-7) also indicates some of the social challenges faced by the Blantyre Water Board such as lack of coordination between the Blantyre Water Board and the water users; political and community committees' interference and rejection of water projects.

It is also indicated that in most places where water facilities are installed, communities lack ownership and a sense of responsibility and there is also lack of effective communication and information dissemination between and amongst various stakeholders involved in the supply and delivery of water. Junge and Chirwa (2007: 5) also comment that unless the Blantyre Water Board addresses public governance and operational efficiency problems, the public cannot participate efficiently in the activities of water supply and cooperation amongst and between stakeholders cannot exist.

The Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI), in its Malawi Business Climate Survey Report of 2009(13), also complained that quality of services offered by the Blantyre Water Board leaves much to be desired and poses obstacles to future investors. The challenges indicated in the BWB Annual Report and Strategy Document coupled with the complaints from the private sector representative (MCCCI) prompted the researcher to carry out an assessment of the mentioned public participation strategies employed by the Blantyre Water Board in order to find out whether they are effective or not.

1.4 Objectives of the research study

This study assesses the effectiveness of public participation strategies in the provision of water in Malawi in the case of the Blantyre Water Board. This will be done with the objective of examining the gaps that exist between theory and practice with a view of proffering possible solutions to those gaps. In order to achieve this broad objective, the study attempts to address the following specific objectives;-

- to assess the extent to which the Blantyre Water Board's public participation strategies have contributed towards the sustainability of public involvement in water programmes or projects in general;

- to find out major challenges that affect public participation in the provision of water in the Blantyre City Assembly in Malawi; and
- to make possible recommendations to the Blantyre Water Board on possible measures and strategies which can be employed in order to improve public participation in the provision of water in the Blantyre City Assembly.

1.5 Significance of the research study

The significance of this research rests on the fact that it is one of the first studies of its kind and it has the potential of stimulating necessary debates for improving knowledge and professional practice in public participation in water service delivery in Malawi. The results of the study will contribute to the search for effective public participation strategies which will enable the Blantyre Water Board and its customers/the public to understand each others' weak and strong areas. It will also enable the two fronts to work as partners in creating workable strategies that are relevant to both sides.

It is further hoped that the results of the study will provide alternatives for all water utility parastatals in Malawi on how to involve their beneficiaries in the delivery of water. The recommendations will also assist the Malawi Government in the attainment of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy on water supply (MGDS, 2006-2011: 81) which stress demand-driven projects in order to explore the public's needs for sustainability. Academically, the results will make some contributions regarding improvements to Public Administration as a discourse, as public participation is a core social issue in modern 'public administration' as an activity, especially in development and decision-making processes (Perry and Kraemer, 1986: 216).

1.6 Delimitations of the study

Hofstee (2006: 6) emphasises that every academic work has its delimitations and this research study is no exception. The research does not intend to produce the best public participation strategies for the Blantyre Water Board but focuses on an exploration of the existing strategies and public views, experiences and expectations in order to propose suggestions or recommendations for the BWB's consideration for improvement. As such, it would be inadvisable to make generalizations without paying attention to the unique features of the case under study. Another envisaged delimitation of the study is that the issue of public participation in water supply service delivery in Malawi is politically sensitive, since the multi-party era, the majority of the community-managed water projects are managed by politicians. It is also imperative that the researcher takes note of this and practice greater caution and sensitivity in information probing and handling.

1.7 Ethical considerations

This being an academic research study, the researcher attained the approval of the University of Fort Hare to carry out this research. Permission was also sought from the Chief Executive of the Blantyre Water Board (BWB) as the overall in charge of the BWB. As recommended by Strydom and Fouche (2005: 59), ethically, in the process of conducting the research, the researcher avoided harm to respondents/experimental subjects; get informed consent; avoided misleading the respondents, avoided violating privacy of the subjects, safeguarded against questions that address sensitive elements like political orientation, sexuality and age in addition to debriefing sessions that were conducted with the respondents.

1.8 Outline of the dissertation

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the research study. Among other issues, it deals with background to the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives, significance of the research study, preliminary literature review, research methodology, delimitation of the research study, ethical considerations and the general orientation.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

This chapter deals with the theoretical framework and the comprehensive literature review in relation to public participation in general.

CHAPTER THREE: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter deals with the research methods used in carrying out the present study like design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure and data collection.

CHAPTER FOUR: Data Analysis and Presentation

This chapter deals with data analysis and presentation.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter concludes the study by providing data findings and recommendations.

1.9 Conclusion

The assessment of the effectiveness of public participation in the supply of water by the Blantyre Water Board (BWB) requires intensive scrutiny. This is the case because the effectiveness of the Blantyre Water Board's public participation strategies takes two different fronts.

On the one hand, the BWB Management and staff's knowledge and understanding of it, not only as a discourse but also as those who will implement, is essential. On the other hand, the perceptions of the water users (water consumers) as beneficiaries are integral to this assessment. The outcomes of the study will contribute to the removal of bottlenecks that exist between the Blantyre Water Board and its consumers which inhibit service delivery.

This chapter has provided the general background to the research study and has briefly emphasised the necessity of using or employing the public participation approach in the supply of water in order to get the public involved so as to enhance service delivery. Factors that delimit the study have been discussed as well. The next chapter provides a general overview of public participation and its advantages once it is implemented by organisations as a tool for or an approach towards public involvement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

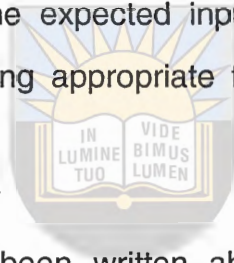
2.1 Introduction

There is an increased desire among the public to participate in decisions that affect them and an increasing need for the policy development process to be informed by input from diverse sources, especially from those involved or affected (Smith, 2003: 22). The power and authority of individual citizens is the basis of democracy. In less complex times, elected representation was a sufficient means for most citizens to participate in government. Recently, for a number of reasons, including the diversity of citizens, cultural heritage, needs, values and interests that have been changing, there has developed a strong desire for the public to be involved, broadly, in governance and directly in policy decisions, both from their perspective and from that of government (Smith, 2003: 22).

One of the biggest public participation challenges facing government today is the need to balance the views of both individuals and the groups who may represent them. Public participation or citizens' engagement recognizes citizens or the public as stakeholders and seeks to involve them directly and at a depth not achieved through more traditional methods of public consultation or through broad aggregate group representation provided by various interest groups and associations (Smith, 2003: 23-24). Many government employees worry about their relationships with the citizenry they serve. They fear the public does not trust their institutions and that their institutions' proposals will inevitably face resistance, regardless of their quality. Public participation in governance and administrative decision-making has become an integral and important aspect of many democratic countries, including a growing number of developing countries. However, striking a good balance between democratic participation and

administrative efficiency presents challenges for many governments and government institutions (Halvorsen, 2003: 535).

Experience suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to public participation is irrelevant. Rather, procedures which involve the public would need to be adapted to the nature of the decision process and take into consideration the national and issue specific circumstances, while satisfying the expectations of stakeholders for a transparent and fair process. Apart from strategic considerations about the nature and scope of public participation, a number of practical issues may affect the success of the public participation process, such as providing clarity about the expected input from stakeholders, organizing effective meetings or providing appropriate feedback on comments received (Halvorsen, 2003: 543).



A wealth of literature has been written about public participation and its relevance to service delivery. Available literature reflects the strides achieved, those currently being achieved and which can only be achieved once the public is involved, engaged or their views incorporated in service delivery activities or, at least, in the allocation of social resources.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Gaster and Squires (2003: 29) appreciate the fact that public 'participation' is always confused, or used interchangeably, with public 'consultation'. These scholars further express that participation and consultation are ideas which are, at present, common within the public sector discourse but which are open to very different interpretations in practice.

Gaster and Squires (2003: 29) define public participation based on the assumption that those affected by a situation are best placed to determine how to change it and make implementation work. Gaster and Squires further explain that participation implies dialogue, leading to greater involvement both in jointly

generating a greater understanding of shared concerns and, in some cases, in the decision making process itself.

Danish Co-operation for Environment and Development (DANCED, 1998: 7) define public consultation as a process of consulting stakeholders before the organisation makes a decision but the stakeholders do not share decision-making responsibility. Bruch (2002: 18) defines public consultation as a two-way relationship in which authorities develop and plan proposals and then ask the public and stakeholders to comment on them in order to obtain input that can be used for the preparation of plans or decision-making. The difference between consultation and participation is that in public participation stakeholders have a say to the extent that their input is included in the decisions made, while in public consultation authorities hold the power to include the input from the public, or not. Consultations are most often performed when decisions have been already made and are a mere formality.

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Theron and Schwella (2000: 46-47) emphasize a process and an element of empowerment when formulating public participation strategies to ensure that local people are able to participate, on equal terms, with professionals and politicians. As participation is based on voluntary and equal contributions, mutual respect and bridge-building between groups are required in order to achieve the best results from the public.

Robert (1990: 137-138) argues that for a public institution to be both effective and responsive in service delivery, it is faced with a special challenge because there is not just one public as there is one boss. The public comprises a vast number of people who want disparate and sometimes inconsistent things, hence Robert stresses that strategies for public participation should not simply be implemented, just as architectural drawings or military plans are implemented. The institutions should be aware that the public they serve is heterogeneous hence there is a need for diversity in strategy formulation to suit the changing times and public needs. This is because the authorizing environment,

comprising legislators, executive-branch officials, media, community and the larger public behind them is in continuous flux.

For instance, the public officials change hands at a fairly rapid rate which affects the participation strategies of public institutions. Additionally, what seems an important issue to the public today may fade by tomorrow as the media in this era are also fickle and sometimes even sensational in their choice of story, in addition to which interest-groups' agendas also shift as the public's attention shifts (Robert, 1990: 137-138).

As this study aims to promote more sustainable ways of governing water resources, so there has evolved a need to more closely consider the relationships between water (as both commodity and natural resource) and the individuals and communities that rely on adequate, equitable and safe management and delivery of this resource. The need to better understand how humans comprehend, interact with and behave in relation to water and water management systems has long been highlighted by both national and supranational governmental bodies (Jeffrey and Seaton, 2004: 278). This can only be possible if public officials (who are the providers of resources like water) and the public or the community (who are the consumers of the resource) interact to share ideas and concerns. This can only happen if the public is given a chance to effectively participate in the activities of institutions such as water utility institutions (Jeffrey and Seaton, 2004: 283).

Public Participation means ensuring that all members of the community are involved in sharing their views, taking part in decision making and contributing to the planning, implementation and management of the institution's activities or projects to the best of their abilities. Participation must take place at all stages of a project, from the beginning of the planning stage, to implementation, management and monitoring (DFID, 2008: 4). There are three *main* types of public participation in development interventions: these are extractive, consultative and interactive.

2.2.1 Extractive Participation

People take part in extractive participation by answering questions posed by institutions using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. Once the surveys have been completed, data is taken outside the community and analyzed by institutions. Recommendations, conclusions and plans for action are formulated by institutions and are later implemented back in the community. In this type of participation people do not have the opportunity to influence the process and the results of the study are not shared or checked for accuracy (Gomez and Nakat, 2002: 347). This was, and in some cases continues to be, the most common type of participation utilized in development interventions.

Extractive participation simplifies the process of data collection and analysis and facilitates the implementation of findings because implementation is done independent of beneficiaries. However, this type of participation does not invite the people's ownership of the projects and often fails because decisions are made without their involvement and the public is merely used as an instrument for data collection or provision (Chambers, 1994: 87).

2.2.2 Consultative Participation

In consultative participation, people participate by being asked for information and institutions listen to their points of views. The professionals, from the institutions, determine both problems and solutions and may modify these according to the responses from participants. This mode of participation does not concede any share in the decision-making processes and professionals are under no obligation to adopt local people's views (Gomez and Nakat, 2002: 348). Individual and group interviews, informal surveys and random visits to households are good examples of consultative participation. The input from communities serves to double-check assumptions made, solutions proposed

and also gives people the impression of being participants in the project when, in fact, they are not (Chambers, 1994: 1442).

2.2.3 Interactive Participation

Interactive participation is a process that encourages the joint analysis of information, which leads to action plans and the creation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. This mode of participation involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. Local groups take control of decisions and people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices. Interactive participation is the most advanced form of public participation and it demands genuine commitment from both the community and the institutions involved (Gomez and Nakat, 2002: 348).

Interactive participation is also hard to accomplish and often requires previous successful experience with participatory initiatives by the community and the institutions, however, there is always a learning process in everything. In most literature this is referred to as public involvement (public participation) and the most preferred form of public participation which has yielded good results for both institutions and the public/communities (Gomez and Nakat, 2002: 347).

'Public participation' in this study means, on the one hand, the involvement/ inclusion of water users / consumers at household level, industrial level or any other level where water can be used or is used. On the other hand, it is the involvement / inclusion of all stakeholders who work hand in hand with the Blantyre Water Board on the activities or projects which enhance the provision of water. According to the World Bank, (2003: 23) 'public participation' is defined in three dimensions thus:

"involvement of all those affected in decision-making about what should be done and how; mass contribution to the development effort, for example to

the implementation of the decisions and sharing in the benefits of the programme”.

The International Association for Public Participation, (IAP2) (2007: 2) provides the following definition:

“public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. Public participation is the process by which an organization involves the interested or affected individuals, organizations, and government entities before making a decision. Public participation is two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions” (IAP2 2007: 2).

Bernier (2005: 3-5) views public participation as:

“engaging openly and respectfully in ‘give and take’ discussions with citizens and/or stakeholders about an impending decision or action”.

Bernier further stresses that public participation is not communication which is the one way transfer of information, not marketing which is selling products or services and not public relations which is selling a policy position (Bernier, 2005: 3-5).

The ‘*public*’ in public participation refers to people individuals who have an interest in or are likely to be affected, either positively or negatively, by a decision to be made. ‘*Stakeholders*’ are individuals or organizations with a concern, an interest or an investment in a particular issue or resource. People want to participate in major decisions that are important to them, for instance, water-related issues such as water quality, water allocation and water projects and management because they are directly affected by the end-result. The term ‘*community*’ and ‘*public*’ are used in this study interchangeably. Edwards and Jones (1976: 12) in De Beer and Swanepoel (1998: 17) give a geographical definition when they maintain that a community is:

“a grouping of people who reside in a specific locality and who exercise some degree of local autonomy in organizing their social life in such a way that they can, from that locality base, satisfy the full range of their daily needs”.

Gomez and Nakat define community participation as:

“a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources that affect them” Gomez and Nakat, 2002: 344).

Community or public participation can also be understood in terms of activities performed by the communities in developmental projects. These activities include an assessment of the local situation, the definition of the problems, the setting of priorities, making decisions, the planning of action programs to solve the problems, sharing responsibilities in the implementation of the project and the evaluation and modification of projects (Whyte 1986: 205).

From the definitions mentioned earlier it can be seen that both community and public terms talk about organized people sharing the same fundamental values hence these terms are used interchangeably in this study. Robbins (1984: 5) defines effectiveness as the ability of managers to achieve their planned institutional goals with the primary concern being the end-result. If the organization's goals and objectives have made an impact, or have had the intended outcomes, it means the management has effectively done its job. Ferreira, et al (2007: 226) and, in practical terms, Duffy (1999: 49) define effectiveness as how well a policy achieves its stated goals. It is further stressed that for strategies to be effective, they must be accepted and able to produce outcomes or a change in behaviour (Ferreira, et al, 2007: 226).

Effective public participation requires citizens who are informed about and knowledgeable of the topic being discussed. They must be willing and able to be involved, having the interest in, time and opportunity for or access to the information. Citizens must take responsibility for the quality of their participation

and be accountable to each other to achieve effective and efficient use of time and other resources.

When processes use representative techniques, community and citizen interests must be balanced. When the collective voice is spoken, there must be accountability on the part of the speaker to the broader community for fair and accurate representation of shared views. Effective public participation requires that the government or government institutions must be competent in the development and implementation of public participation programs. They must be willing and able to listen, truly seeking and valuing diverse voices, making a special effort to hear and understand those who, for various reasons, may otherwise go unheard. Effective public participation requires that all participants (citizens, communities and sponsors) demonstrate respect for each other and commitment to the process, and have the patience and discipline to work together toward shared perspectives and commonly desired outcomes (Smith, 2003: 34).

Smith's arguments justify the need for the Blantyre Water Board to ensure that its strategies should be well stipulated and aligned to the diverse needs of the public with the knowledge that human beings are heterogeneous. The strategies must also be able to produce beneficial outcomes and make an impact in the community it supplies water to and there must be a change in behaviour and attitude in the public being served. For instance, the public must be willing to report illegal connections, to settle their water bills, in addition to which thefts and vandalism must be reported and the relationship between the supplier (BWB) and the public must create an environment conducive to the proper delivery of service (water) (Smith, 2003: 34). Therefore, it is not just a question of using the public participation approach but how to design a process that yields the most benefits for both the public and the institution. For public participation to be effective, it must take place at all stages of a project from the planning stage,

management, monitoring and evaluation to implementation. It must also be well planned, well timed, competently staffed, sufficiently resourced and genuinely done (Swaroop and Narayana, 2003: 24).

For public participation to be effective all relevant stakeholders must be taken on board when planning through to the implementation of projects or activities. Some of the stakeholders to be included in the participation processes are government ministries, private institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and all consumers (DFID, 2008: 6). Stakeholders may be classified into four main groups or sectors. These are *public sector stakeholders* which include government ministries dealing with issues relevant to your core business. *Private Sector stakeholders* are comprised of stakeholders or groups active in commerce and industry who use the organization's products or services. *Civil society* which consists of organizations not in any way dependent on or responsible to either the public or private sectors usually come into existence to address specific problems, for example; health, education, water and housing, among other issues. The last group is that of the *service or product users* such as water users (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2006: 17-19).

2.3 Legal framework

From the local context, given the authoritarian practices of Dr H. Kamuzu Banda's regime (the first Malawian President after colonialism) who ruled Malawi under which no opposing/alternative views were entertained) the public had little or no role in matters of policy making or state owned decision making processes, despite being the proprietors of those institutions (Pachai, 1973: 117). Even civil society and non-governmental organizations had little or no involvement in issues of advocacy, capacity building and community empowerment. Since the introduction of the multi-party system in 1994, many policy reforms have taken place in Malawi. In October 1995, the government produced a policy document entitled Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme, which advocates

that poor people should be empowered to improve their plight and contribute to national development (UNDP, 1997:14).

However, for this to be achieved, the state needs to provide a conducive environment for the programmes' success. Among others, this led to the inclusion of the principles of public participation and demand-driven in the Malawi National Water Policy in an effort to respond to and address public needs and demands (MWNWP, 2005: 2).

The democratization process which ensued after the 1994 multi-party general elections was characterized by more openness and less restrictions which paved the way to the growth of civil societies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The first and second democratic presidents, Bakili Muluzi and Bingu wa Mutharika pledged to build an open society governed by democratic rules and institutions which encouraged the participation of individuals, groups and communities in the political, social, economic and human development of the country (Rogge, 1997: 3). The proliferation of NGOs and civil society in Malawi, thereafter, testifies to this assertion.

The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, Chapter IV of 1996 upholds human rights, freedoms and participatory democracy as the vehicles of real transformation. This underlines the need for people to be central in driving programmes affecting their lives. It is, therefore, a Constitutional obligation for government institutions to ensure that the provision of services is done in a participatory and sustainable manner. This makes it pertinent for water utilities to seek the active participation of all stakeholders in realizing this goal (The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, 1996).

The Blantyre Water Board is mandated under the Water Works Act No. 17 of 1995 (WWA, 1995) to: "supply potable water for commercial, industrial and domestic use to Blantyre Water Supply Area comprising Blantyre City and

defined surrounding rural environs covering a total area of 76,000 hectares” (WWA, 1995).

The Water Works Act was passed in 1995 to regulate water supply and sanitation services. The Act established and defined the operation of five water boards namely: Blantyre, Lilongwe, Northern, Central and Southern Region water boards. The Act also mandates that the water boards manage sewerage systems (currently under the purview of local governments). The formulation of the policy, review of the Act and establishment of the water boards was supported by the World Bank between 1994 and 2003.

There are proposals for a Water Supply and Sanitation Services Act to give more independence to water boards and to allow for more partnerships (Vazquez, 2008: 20). The most significant policy document, in this regard, is the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy document (MGDS, 2006–2011) which was approved in 2007. The strategy recognizes the importance of safe drinking water and sanitation for economic development and therefore seeks to increase access to water within an average distance of 500m from households. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy document (MGDS, 2006-2011: 81), in its key actions, also stresses the need for water utilities to establish water supply systems in urban, peri-urban and market centres using demand-driven and responsive approaches which promote public participation in order to explore the public's needs.

In an international context, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a global framework has several strategic goals, targets, priority areas; themes and sub-themes which countries must achieve for the wellness of their inhabitants. From the MDGs, regions and nations have developed their own protocols. One of the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015 is for countries to provide efficient and sustainable water and sanitation services to low-income areas. To this effect, regions and countries have also developed their own

strategic policy documents with strong linkages to the Millennium Development Goals.

When formulating the MDGs, it was agreed that water management needs awareness-raising and public involvement more now than ever before as the limits of available water for the competing demands have become increasingly obvious. It was also noted at a conference held in Finland from 20th October – 7th November 2003 that there is a real water crisis looming in many parts of the world. The challenges of demand-management, both in water supply and irrigation, call for inter-disciplinary approaches and international-basin-wide cooperation hence the need to involve all water users in management of this scarce resource (Wihuri; Snel; *et al*, 2003: 24).

Similar to the Millennium Development Goals, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) reiterated the aim to have the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water to have access by 2015. It urges national governments and institutions to develop programmes for sustainable development and to empower local communities to participate in these programmes (Razzaque, 2004: 15). A momentous step in public participation occurred on 30 October, 2001 with reference to the 1998 Convention on access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental matters which commonly known as the Aarhus Convention. The convention established a greatly expanded role for the public in government decision making. This requires change globally as more countries ratify the treaty. Aarhus has “three pillars” which are: access to information, as knowledge is vital if the public is to participate in a meaningful and informed way; public participation in decision-making, as Aarhus adopts the liberal democratic justifications supporting public participation in government decisions and the third pillar being access to justice (Zillman and Pring, 2002: 6).

Transparency and public participation are important ingredients in achieving effective water governance. Since the Rio Conference, diverse international instruments advocate access to information and public participation in water management.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) establishes specific obligations for member states to include the public in the planning and management of river basins and supplying processes. Since the Rio Conference, there has been no doubt that policies aimed at achieving sustainable development must be participatory (Principle 10, Rio Declaration). An important aspect of sustainable development, which relates to water governance, refers to the range of political, social, economic and institutional systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources and the delivery of water services at different levels of society.

According to the Water Framework Directive, the main principles for effective water governance are: openness and transparency, inclusion and communication, coherence and integration, as well as equity and ethical standards (Mizanur, 2004: 567). The Rio Declaration (Principle 10) and Agenda 21 (Section 3 of Agenda 21 on "Strengthening the Role of Major Groups") stress the importance of public participation for environment protection. Within the scope of water management, the need to use participatory methodologies in international instruments is also referenced. The 1992 Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development, Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 on the Protection of the Quality and Supply of Freshwater Resources, the Ministerial Declaration of Bonn International Conference on Freshwater (December 2001), and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the 3rd World Water Forum Ministerial Declaration all emphasize public participation in water supply and management as an aspect which can empower people, and women in particular, through a participatory process of water management (Berreira, 2003: 356).

A country's legal system forms the basis of the public's rights to access to information and participation in environmental decision-making. The legal system also serves as a mechanism for remedy and redress in case the rights of the public are violated, just as Malawi is guided by its Constitution.

Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, most developing countries and transition economies have improved the access to information initiative. Specifically, the initiative has developed a framework of indicators that measure a country's progress toward implementation of the access principles articulated in Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration (<http://www.accessinitatives.org>, 2004: 51).

2.4 Theoretical framework

Literature addressing theories of public participation appears unbounded and complex. According to some research dealing with the theoretical context of public participation, it is the proper utilization of appropriate public participation mechanisms chosen by an organisation that brings about successful public participation (Halvorsen, 2003: 541). These mechanisms include transparent elections for project committees' public meetings, consultations, participatory planning; implementation; monitoring and evaluation, public hearings, public forums, community sensitization and advisory committees made up of citizens, among other mechanisms (Lando, 2003: 74).

As indicated, there are various theories that can influence one's understanding of the importance of public participation to any organization but the theory underpinning this study is termed the behavioural approach theory by Chester Barnard who bridged the classical and behavioural viewpoints and saw organizations as social systems which require human cooperation. Barnard, in Robbins (1984: 32), argues that:

"the success of any organization/institution depends on maintaining good relations with those people and institutions outside the institution and with whom the institution regularly interacts. By recognizing that institutions

cannot act as islands but relies on investors, consumers, customers, suppliers and other external constituencies' dependence, managers must examine the environment they operate in and then adjust the institution's strategies in order to maintain a state of equilibrium".

Barnard, in his behavioural theory, stresses the importance of institutions to engage, involve or interact with the external world in order for them to deliver its goods or services effectively. This confirms how successful an institution would be with the involvement of the outside world, but if there is no cooperation with people from within and outside the institution, the institution's survival would be threatened. Hence, an institution needs to develop effective strategies which would enable it to reach a state of equilibrium wherein both the internal and external needs should be fully or partially satisfied (Robbins, 1984: 33).

Writing from Malawian experience and contrary to what Barnard's theory advocates, Makuwira (2005: 115) argues that

"empirical evidence suggests that most of the government institutions in Malawi understand the social, economic and political environment in which they exist but do not consider that the communities in which they operate are part of a broader system of opposing agendas and interests of their developmental plans".

This testifies to the fact that if the Blantyre Water Board, which is one of the government institutions in Malawi, does not consider the communities of Blantyre City as part of broader opposing agendas, its developmental plans cannot succeed. The fact that some communities refuse water projects, do not pay for their water bills, do not report burst pipes, among other problems, is a clear sign that the relationship between the Blantyre Water Board and the communities around it is not good enough although the Malawi National Water Policy (MWNWP, 2005: vii) emphasises that public participation and demand driven approaches are the best for water utilities to perform better, to address

the public's needs and to resolve social problems. However, according to Makuwira (2005: 116) this is not practically being fully implemented by most government water utilities.

Just as Frederick articulated in Levin, *et al.*, (1990: 268) that in addition to the orthodox values that underpin public administration such as economy, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability to elected officials and political non-partisanship, there are other important values. These important values include worker and citizen responsiveness and participation in decision making, the provision of a range of citizen choices and administrative responsibilities for public sector effectiveness. This justifies the need for any organisation's management to include and involve its staff as well as its beneficiaries in its decision making and project implementation processes. Government institutions and the public are cautioned to observe closely the public participatory theory being followed as other theories are participatory but take a top-down approach which does not achieve effective results in most circumstances.

One of the contradicting public participatory theories is the Traditional Public Participation (TPP). Traditional Public Participation provides a forum through which the scientific information and values of the public and the organization can be integrated so that the final decision is viewed as both desirable and feasible by the broadest portion of society" (Paletto, 2002: 199). This theory is based on the following basic principles: it is a top-down approach where public authority holds the initiative and organizes all phases of the decision-making process; it is based on the principle of consultation and the social actors participate in planning and management through formal hearings and comment periods. The Traditional Public Participation Theory has led to *consultative planning* which is a method of planning and management of the resources based on the principle of participation through consultation. Nevertheless, the consultative process does not concede any share in decision making and professionals

(institutions/organizations) have no obligation to take people's views into account (Paletto, 2002: 200).

In contrast to the Traditional Public Participation Theory, another ideal participatory theory is Participatory Democracy Theory (PDT). According to Paletto (2002: 201), Participatory Democracy Theory (PDT) is an approach in which "a broad range of interests are represented and participants are integrally involved throughout the planning processes, from initiation through decision implementation and monitoring and evaluation" (Paletto, 2002: 201). The main principles of this theory are: it is a bottom-up approach where the communities (social actors) hold the initiative and organize all phases of the decision-making process; it is based on the principle of collaboration; it finds its conceptual roots in communicative action and the social actors participate in planning and management through face-to-face dialogue and mutual learning.

The Participatory Democracy Theory has generated three principal methods, the first of which is *collaborative planning* which is the: collective process for resolving conflicts and advancing shared visions involving a set of diverse stakeholders" (ibid: 202). Paletto (2002: 202) states that this theory assists in *coordinating resource planning and management* which is an approach to integrated resource planning and management that utilizes planning teams made up of organizations' representatives, interest groups and members of the general public. This theory fits the participatory democracy model of public administration in public management (Paletto, 2002: 203). The theory also generated the *involvement process* through which stakeholders are not only consulted but involved in the decision-making process and their input is taken into consideration (Paletto, 2002: 204).

In order for an institution/organisation to apply the best approaches set down on paper, it needs the coordination and support of its workers. For the support to be

genuine, management needs to work together with its subordinates and treat them as team-mates. This can be evidenced by what Mary Parker Follett denotes (in Robbins, 1984: 33) by claiming that organisations should work as a group of togetherness for team efforts, not individualism.

Follett (ibid) stresses that managers and workers should view themselves as partners and as part of the common group. In emphasis to what Chester Barnard argues (in Robbins, 1984: 32), a systems approach defines a system or an institution/organisation as a set of interrelated and interdependent parts arranged in a manner that produces a unified whole.

The systems approach inter-relates inputs from the outside (environment) then the system carries out a transformation process to produce the outputs back into the environment. For example, for an organisation like the Blantyre Water Board, this entails that inputs like chemicals, labour, capital; untreated water sourced from the external environment would be transformed or processed into treated water and delivered back to the external environment. The systems approach states that the system's success depends on its successful interactions with the environment upon which it is dependent. If, for instance, the Blantyre Water Board does not interact well with its outsiders, the public can sabotage its service delivery processes hence hindering the entire production process.

From the same perspective, the contingency approach in one of its variables argues that managers must be aware that the degree of uncertainty caused by the political, technological, socio-cultural and economic changes impacts on the management process and management must adapt to them accordingly. This is to say that, in this democratic era, the public is aware of their human rights and that public participation is one of them, hence institutions/organisations must turn away from the traditional way of managing both its staff as well as the public they serve for effective service delivery. Managers must also be cautious of the fact that what works best in a stable and predictable environment may be totally inappropriate in a rapidly changing and unpredictable environment (Robbins,

1984: 39-40).

The recognition that no institution/organisation is an island unto itself is a major contribution of the systems approach to management. Management must adapt to the changing expectations of the society in which it operates. As values, customs and tastes change, so too must management. This applies to their products and service offerings, as well as internal policies (Robbins, 1984: 60). International experience has shown that public participation is an essential part of effective and accountable governance at community level. One important way of achieving successful and lasting models, to ensure that public participation takes place, is through establishing a structured and institutionalised framework for public participation. Structured and institutionalised models of participation generally work when citizens see them as legitimate and credible where there is political commitment to their implementation and they have legal status (DANCED, 1988: 24). Structured and institutional models of participation will not work when independent and legitimate voices are co-opted within civic society: there is no definite political commitment to the models and when the system exists in principle (that is, it sounds good on paper) but when it comes to carrying it out, the necessary resources are not available.

Kansas State University Publication series (www.oznet.ksu.edu/library), "Keeping on Track", identifies a few simple preconditions for public participation to be successful which include meaningful public participation processes. Both parties (institutions and the beneficiaries) must listen to each other rather than just talking to each other and they must ensure that relevant information is presented to the public in an accessible form which may require the use of local languages. The best participatory approach must provide feedback on the participation process and the final decision that emerges. It must also include elected politicians in the participation process and ensure that policies exist to

guide the implementing administrators in the right manner and the reasons for participation and must recognise that public meetings are only one form of participation which, unless properly managed, can bias input in favour of those that are vocal and/or articulate (Mqulwana, 2010: 9).

The current participatory development discourse of involving the private sector to participate in water utilities has come under heavy scrutiny by Malawians. Scholars are debating the efficacy of Private Sector Participation (PSP) in water service delivery, which is a condition set by the World Bank. For example, Chirwa and Junge (2007: 1-6) argue that Private Sector Participation (PSP) and Privatization are not the best models for Malawians to adopt because these models are a high risk strategy. Chirwa and Junge (2007: 2) provide international experience of PSP that only 3% of water companies in developing countries have some form of PSP after dramatic failure was experienced in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania); Conakry (Guinea); Manila (Philippines); Buenos Aires (Argentina); Atlanta (USA), among others.

The authors continue to argue that the introduction of Private Sector Participation may increase the efficiency of public companies, and according to their research, the PSP does not necessarily lead to improved conditions for the poor. For instance, water tariff and water selling prices may be increased to meet operational costs and to maximize profits, at the expense of poor Malawians. The poorest will be the most affected due to the cost barrier, hence the wealthy are likely to be the country's decision makers in issues of water supply and delivery (Chirwa and Junge, 2007: 2).

Chirwa and Junge (2007: 4) recommend, among several other recommendations, that water utilities in Malawi should not be privatized if the government's effort of poverty reduction is a priority, and only once a goal of universal water access is achieved. The authors also recommend the formation of Water Users' Associations (WUAs) as the best intervention or strategy to enable public participation in water supply management. Chirwa and Junge

(2007: 5) also recommend regular involvement with communities on formulation of reform measures and that the participation must take place throughout the intervention and implementation processes to allow the public and other stakeholders to express their preferences.

Chirwa and Junge (2007: 6) also appeal for robust monitoring mechanisms of consumer feedback as part of operations and extensive information campaigns regarding any design and decision taken, or to be taken, by the water boards. It is also indicated that respondents in their study emphasized and expressed the desire to have their views heard by water boards before any project, program or decisions are made regarding water service delivery. The research findings by Chirwa and Junge further justify the need for the Blantyre Water Board's public participation strategies to be effective so that the beneficiaries, or the public, should be able to take part in the activities of the Blantyre Water Board (Chirwa and Junge, 2007: 6). This proves that there is still a dire need by the public to participate in water related activities, which is an essential component if a social system such as the Blantyre Water Board is to function well.

2.5 Conclusion

Camay and Gordon (2004: 249) write that nations cannot be built without the popular support and full participation of the people. The economic crisis cannot be resolved; neither can the human and economic conditions be improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of the people.

Therefore, there must be an unfolding of institutions/organisations' processes and policies to accommodate the freedom of opinions, the toleration of differences and the acceptance of consensus on issues as well as ensuring the effective participation of the people and their organisations and associations. This chapter provided an in-depth account of conceptual, legal and theoretical frameworks on public participation paradigm and public administration in general.

The next chapter provides the research methods used in carrying out the present study. These include the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure and data collection.



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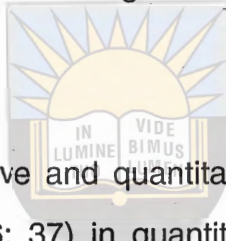
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the study's research design and methodology which are based on a case study of the Blantyre Water Board and which incorporates various methodologies and technologies. It also provides a detailed discussion of the process followed to collect data for this study, the research techniques applied, the process of data analysis, the methods applied as well as the limitations that were encountered during the data collection period.

3.2 Research design



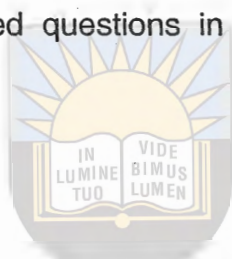
The study used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006: 37) in quantitative methodology, a researcher assigns numbers to observations, views and analyzes data and qualitative methodology refers to research that produces descriptive data. This is generally participants' own or spoken words pertaining to their experience or perception.

Somekh and Lewin (2005: 40) suggest three broad reasons why it is important to use multiple methods in a study, namely: to enable confirmation or corroboration of each other via triangulation; to elaborate or develop analysis; to provide richer detail and initiating new lines of thinking. Brynard and Hanekom (2006: 38) claim that the use of multiple methods has the potential to expand the scope and the breadth of a particular study by using different methods in different components. Qualitative methodology was applied in this study because its real purpose was not to count people but rather to explore the range of opinions and different representations of the issue (Gaskell, 2000: 41). It was also preferred because of its emphasis on people's lived experiences.

This made qualitative methodology fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on events, processes and structures of their lives, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments and presumptions and connecting these meanings to the social world around them. In this research, qualitative refers to the type of research involving the interpretation of non-numerical data and, in the broader sense, qualitative research is fundamentally a descriptive form of research. The main advantage of using qualitative research is that it offers detailed insights into a particular phenomenon as it allows the researcher to draw more information from the respondents. It also provides more in-depth description and understanding of events or actions which gives the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into why and how events occur and it also allows respondents to express their opinions in their own words. It also focuses on the real-life experiences of people as the fundamental theme of qualitative research is a phenomenological one, where the actor's perspective is the empirical point of departure. Qualitative methodologies allow the researcher to know people personally, to see them as they are, and to experience their daily struggles when confronted with real-life situations. This enables the researcher to interpret and describe the actions of people (Brynard and Hanekom, 2005: 37).

However, it has its own limitations as it is time-consuming, particularly when it comes to collecting data. Despite this disadvantage, the qualitative research method was utilized as it was considered appropriate for the purposes of this study especially through focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews. According to Litosseliti, (2003: 42) focus groups are structured groups with selected participants, normally led by a moderator. Focus groups are set up in order to explore specific topics and individual views and experiences through group interaction. The main objective of focus groups was to get beneath the surface of public participation with the presumption that respondents would reveal the comments of others and in this case the aim was to explore, in detail, the perceptions of participants with regard to water users' participation in the Blantyre Water Board's activities (Litosseliti, 2003: 42).

Quantitative research methods were also utilized in this study and unlike qualitative research methods; quantitative research methods do not involve the investigation of processes but emphasizes the collection of facts that will not change easily. The main advantage of using the quantitative research method is that it uses structured methods to evaluate objective data. However, one of the shortcomings of quantitative research is that it controls the investigation and structure of the research situation in order to identify and isolate variables (Kumar, 2005: 69). In this study, quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire using closed ended questions, whereas qualitative data was collected through open ended questions in one-on-one interviews including focus groups.



3.3 Unit of analysis

The research was carried out at the Blantyre Water Board in the City of Blantyre in the Southern part of Malawi. The Blantyre Water Board was chosen as a unit of analysis because it was found, during the literature review process that no research has ever been previously done on the Blantyre Water Board's public participation strategies and this is the first one. Primary and secondary data was collected from the BWB and its staff as participants. The Blantyre Water Board's supply environs were also sampled from the Urban and Peri-Urban areas in order to explore perceptions and perspectives of the public as water users. The Lilongwe and the Northern Region Water Boards, which are situated in the Central and Northern part of Malawi, were also approached for triangulation reasons.

3.4 Target population and sampling

The population of a study is the group that is of interest to it. The projected population for Blantyre City Assembly for 2009 is 940,000 people and about 825,000 is the estimated number of water consumers while the rest find their own sources of water.

Out of this population, 70% are in the peri-urban areas and 247,500, who represent 30%, are located in the urban areas (National Statistical Office, 2002:14). The sample for the study was drawn from this target population of 825,000 water consumers which include the Blantyre Water Board staff and management.

In research, a sample is a portion of a larger group or population and has similar characteristics as the target population and can be used to make inferences on it (Gay and Airasian, 2003: 42). A sample of informants was drawn from the population of this study. A two-staged purposive sampling procedure was used to select research participants from the target population. Purposive sampling is the selection of participants who possess particular characteristics relevant to the study and are information rich (Struwig and Stead, 2001: 58). The 2 stages are: (i) stratified purposive sampling and (ii) critical case sampling.

Stratified purposive sampling involves identifying the main sub-groups in the target population that are of relevance to the study. This stage was used to select Water Users' Associations or Community Water Committees from peri-urban locations which were purposively selected. These were selected based on geographical location and area of operation; community managed or private-provider managed water kiosks. Focus groups were converged for discussions using the similar strategy. This was done to enable the researcher to analyze whether the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of public participation strategies is informed by water users' geographical area of operation, key players involved in the operation or other factors. Randomly selected households were visited in selected residential areas in the urban area.

Critical case sampling was employed to select staff members of the Blantyre Water Board. This sample comprised of top management, middle level and the supervisory level staff members. The aim was to select information rich participants from each level.

These are participants who are deemed to have knowledge of the community development projects and the involvement of the public in the provision of water in Malawi. The critical case sampling procedure was also used to identify and select nationally representative umbrella coalitions/associations and corporate organizations who are large consumers of water in the Blantyre City. Some of the institutions visited and interviewed are the Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI), hospitals, hotels and Consumers' Association of Malawi (CAMA). The sample was gender sensitive and included the disadvantaged.

3.5 Data collection methods and procedures

The study employed two (2) methods; interviews and the administration of questionnaires. Bak (2004: 19) reiterates the advantages of using multiple methods that it is to counter weaknesses that each may bring to the study if used individually. The complementary role of each method assists in the verification and validity of findings. In addition, the complementarity of multiple data sources enriched the depth of the data. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004: 94) agree that contradictory findings may arise when using multiple methods but are vital to analyze as they may point to critical aspects of the subject and cross verification may address the problem of contradictions.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

In this study, questionnaires were considered appropriate because they provided the best way of gathering structured data from respondents in a standardized manner, through self-completion (Somekh and Lewin, 2005: 64). In addition, questionnaires were chosen as instruments of data collection because of their ease and ability to collect large quantities of data within a specified time. In this study, a total of 100 questionnaires were administered per location or township and another 100 questionnaires were also administered at the Blantyre Water Board by the researcher and two research assistants.

Questionnaires were distributed for self-completion to the Blantyre Water Board's staff and out of 100 questionnaires, 79 were completed. In the case of consumers, similar structured questionnaires were administered and out of 100 targeted households, 84 respondents were surveyed (*see table 3.1 below*).

The challenges faced on the ground were lack of understanding of the concept of public participation by most respondents. This consumed much of the researcher's time in having to explain public participation in detail. Lack of understanding of the concept coupled with loyalties to the organization and its management led to most respondents, especially from the Blantyre Water Board staff's side, not to submit the questionnaires on due dates. On the side of consumers, time constraints posed a challenge and this caused the researcher to fail to reach the targeted 100 households. However, the responses' rate was acceptable to make conclusions derived from the findings analyzed in the next chapter.

Table 3.1: Distribution of questionnaires

<i>Location</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Collected</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
BWB Staff	100	79	79 percent
Consumers	100	84	84 percent

3.5.2 In-depth interviews

In depth interviews were conducted with key informants from the Blantyre Water Board, the Lilongwe Water Board and the Northern Region Water Board and the sampled research participants from Blantyre City to solicit their assessment of the effectiveness of public participation strategies currently employed by the Blantyre Water Board. A semi-structured interview guide with both open-ended and closed-ended questions was used to guide the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews assisted in the generation of standardized data and also in keeping the interview focused on the critical questions of the study and ensured that all the interviews were conducted in the same manner. Open-ended questions allow for flexibility, probing and verification against any possible bias or lack of clarity in responses (Patton, 1990: 10).

Ten Blantyre Water Board staff members were targeted as key informants and all of them were interviewed. Out of five targeted focus groups from the Blantyre City's low-income areas, only four were interviewed due to time constraints. Out of 11 targeted participants from big consumers, consumers' and private sector associations, universities, hospitals, hotels and schools, ten were interviewed except one hotel whose management was too frustrated to handle the interview session due to hotel management problems experienced at the time of the interviews.

Table 3.2: No. of key informants targeted in Blantyre City for interviews

<i>Location</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Interviewed</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
BWB staff	10	10	100 percent
Big consumers	11	10	90.9 percent
Focus groups	5	4	80 percent

Five focus groups were targeted in Water Users' Associations and community based organizations. Only 4 of these focus groups were interviewed due logistical problems.

Table 3.3: No. of key informants targeted at the Lilongwe Water Board for interviews

<i>Location</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Interviewed</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
LWB staff	5	5	100 percent
Big consumers	10	10	100 percent
Focus groups	2	2	100 percent

From the Lilongwe Water Board, 5 key informants, 10 major water users from the urban areas and 2 Water Users' Associations from the low-income-areas were targeted and all of them were interviewed.

Table 3.4: No. of key informants targeted at the Northern Region Water Board for interviews

<i>Location</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Interviewed</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
NRWB staff	5	4	80 percent
Consumer representative organizations	2	2	100 percent
Big consumers	10	10	100 percent

From the Northern Region Water Board, 4 out of 5 key informants were interviewed as one of them was away attending to official duties. On top of these key informants from the NRWB, 2 consumers' representative organizations and 10 big consumers/water users were also targeted. All of them were interviewed.

3.6 Data analysis

This involves turning data into evidence to answer the research questions or objectives which include identifying "themes, trends and relationships" (Mouton, 2004: 72). Content analysis was used to analyze the data from the interviews. The data was coded and categorized in order to examine the themes, relationships and critical issues for analysis and interpretation. Coding involved assigning a symbol to a dataset as a way of summarizing it and identifying the emerging themes relevant to the research questions (Mouton, 2004: 72). Gomm (2004: 137) refers to this method as thematic analysis wherein the analyst looks for themes present. A framework was used to make interpretations, inferences, comparisons and contrasts. The analysis was descriptive of the state of public participation strategies at the Blantyre Water Board.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. SPSS is a user friendly package and is particularly useful in psychology, sociology, psychiatry and other social science related disciplines. Public Administration as a discipline, together with public participation as a discourse, falls under social science studies as they deal with human behaviour, hence the SPSS was chosen to analyse the collected data. SPSS accepts descriptive analysis hence it was preferred and it produces percentages as evidenced by the findings in this research. Data was first transcribed and thereafter those substantive parts in the transcript that related to the research questions, in addition to new topics, were classified and coded according to themes. Each section of the transcript was coded with words which described what participants said and was repeated every time an idea reappeared.

According to Mitchell et al (2005: 227) coding is defined as the process of identifying the variables needed to be analysed statistically and assigning different code values to them. Once the quantitative data was collected, it was organised and coded for analysis. After coding the data, it was captured on the computer and analysed using the SPSS programme. The usage of SPSS was made easier through the use of QSRN Vivo, computer software which aids analytic rigour when researching in non English languages and cultures.

Kerlinger (1986: 125) states that the plan for analysis and interpretation is always guided by the purpose of the study. Kerlinger further argues that data analysis itself does not provide answers to research questions. Answers are found by way of interpretation of data and the results. To interpret is to explain and to find meaning. Kerlinger (1986: 126) further argues that it is difficult or impossible to explain raw data, one must first describe and analyse the data and then interpret the results of the analysis. Mouton (2001: 108) refers to data analysis as a process that involves breaking up the data collected into manageable themes, patterns and relationships.

This is done with the aim of understanding the various components of data via inspection of the relationships between concepts, variables and seeing whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated. Bless and Higsson-Smith (2006: 163) argue that the process of data analysis takes many different forms depending upon the nature of the research question and design as well as the nature of the data itself. Once the data collection has been completed, an in-depth analysis of the data is conducted by means of various methods which include data filtering, mind mapping and spiral data analysis. This research project used data filtering methods and mind mapping techniques.

3.6.1 Data filtering technique

Researchers argue that it is often physically impossible to perform an in-depth analysis of all data available in a general field of interest. That is to say, it is impossible to use all the data collected during research (Brynard and Hanekom, 2006: 60-61). In these circumstances, the exact data which was required for this research project was determined and selected from a general field by filtering the general field until that which was critical to the research remained. However, the following points were considered: topic of the research; objective of the research; data necessary for the research; contribution of the data towards the research project; relationship of the data to the research topic; contribution of the particular data towards the elucidation of the research problem and target population involved. The filtering process was combined with the mind mapping technique in order to expedite the research for the eventual analysis of critical data.

3.6.2 Mind mapping technique

Mind mapping is a method that can be applied to the process of data analysis in order to filter out irrelevant data (Brynard and Hanekom, 2006: 62). Mind mapping essentially contributed towards the process of filtering out irrelevant data from the data collected, until only relevant data remained and was analysed with the aim of achieving the objectives of this research.

3.7 Data presentation

This basically means that all the data gathered on one variable is summarised for easy comprehension and utilization. The summary can take on different forms, such as a tabular or graphic display or visual representation of the data; bar graphs; doughnut graphs, histograms; frequency polygons; pie charts; among others. Bless and Kathiria (1993: 29) describe pie charts as diagrams that do not rely on bars of different heights, but use a circle subdivided into sections by radial lines. They further point out that this is a simple method of presenting the various components and their relationship. Each figure is transformed into an angle in degrees. In this research, graphic presentations in the form of pie charts have been used to display various variables of the respondents in the target groups of staff and consumers of the Blantyre Water Board. In cases where comparisons have been made between consumers and staff respondents, two pie charts have been used side by side.

3.8 Conclusion

All the ethical considerations, research design and methodology were followed systematically when conducting this research and helped the researcher to avoid deviating from the plan and structure. Questionnaires were chosen in this research in order for the researcher to collect more data than would have been the case if face-to-face interviews were the only method used, since they are time-consuming.

Focus group discussions were also conducted in order to get different views on the research topic from a wider perspective within a short period of time. Face-to-face interviews were also systematically conducted and key informants were very cooperative. Observation was also chosen as a way of collecting data for precision purposes, in order to identify what the participants were saying. For instance, in low-income areas where participants were complaining of poor

service delivery, it was actually observed that they were drawing water from the streams.

It was also observed that most of the consumers were willing to participate in this research and those research respondents who were interviewed clearly demonstrated passion and willingness to participate. Participants did so with the belief that the results and recommendations, once taken into consideration, might bring improvements to their water supply conditions and their relationship with the Blantyre Water Board. The next chapter presents the data and offers analysis of the findings thereof.



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Figure (31) illustrates that the Blantyre Water Board's staff were of the view that the top-down approach which the BWB uses is effective with 68.1% of respondents supporting this point while 64.1% of the consumers were of the view that the BWB's approach is not effective.

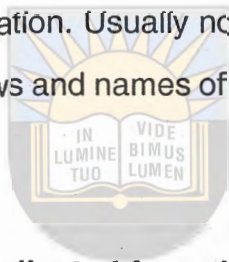
Both the Blantyre Water Board staff and consumers supported the idea that public participation can help the BWB in resolving some problems such as the settlement of water bills, illegal connections, and rejection of water projects, among others. Both the Blantyre Water Board's consumers and staff shared the view that poor management style is a major contributing factor in hindering consumer (the public) participation. Staff also indicated lack of community sensitization as another factor. The BWB staff and consumers had different views regarding whether the Blantyre Water Board provides information to the public it serves or not. The Blantyre Water Board staff indicated that the BWB does provide information to the public it serves while the consumers indicated that the BWB does not provide information to them as the public. This clearly shows that these two parties (consumers and staff) are operating on different fronts and each party has different views of the other.

Both the Blantyre Water Board consumers and staff indicated that the BWB 'sometimes' provides information to the public it serves which entails that the consumers are not always provided with the information they require. In terms of public involvement, the Blantyre Water Board staffs indicated that the public (consumers) it serves are involved in its activities and yet the public which is served disagreed with this view and indicated that the BWB does not involve the consumers. This entails that the Blantyre Water Board might be providing the information but it does not reach out to the deserving public or it is not making the expected impact, hence the indication from the public that it is not provided with information.

The Blantyre Water Board staff indicated that the top-down approach is effective and yet the consumers indicated that it is not effective. This entails that the feelings of the beneficiaries are not assessed by the Blantyre Water Board and the BWB only assumes that the approach it uses is effective without testing the impact of the output on the ground.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis focuses on the descriptive data analysed from the respondents' own spoken words pertaining to their experiences or perceptions and primary data from observation. Usually no numbers or counts are assigned to these observations and views and names of participants are not mentioned for purposes of confidentiality.



4.3.1 Discussion of data collected from the BWB staff and consumers

Interviews and observations were conducted at the Blantyre Water Board and from its supply environs in addition to the primary data collection. In the primary data (documentation), nothing specific regarding the BWB public participation strategies was found apart from the outlined duties and responsibilities (job descriptions) for the Kiosk Manager (KM) and Marketing and Public Affairs Manager (MPAM). The MPAM job description does not clearly indicate the public participation strategies and in the case of the Kiosk Manager's job description, the strategies of involving the public from low-income areas are well stated and easy to be followed even by any other employee befitting the post.

Interviews with respondents from the Blantyre Water Board staff were very fruitful. It was gathered that BWB puts much effort in addressing the public's needs such as getting more people connected with water taps and the scarcity of water through the projects being funded by the European Union/European Investment Bank (EU/EIB) and World Bank.

The respondents indicated that the efforts are good but the public is not communicated to properly, regarding what is happening internally, hence the creation of a gap between the Blantyre Water Board, as the supplier of water, and the consumers. To this effect, the respondents indicated that the BWB communication strategies are ineffective and need to be worked on.

On the matter of public participation strategies, the BWB staff respondents indicated that the water board needs to formulate some public participation strategies or guidelines together with the public it serves which should be followed religiously. The respondents also indicated that the involvement of the public could help to solve some social problems currently experienced by the BWB, such as the settlement of water bills, vandalism, illegal connections, reporting of burst pipes and thefts of pipes, amongst others. The participants also indicated that dual meter reading could be a better option for exploration in order to resolve water bill queries. Respondents were also quick to indicate that supplier-consumer relationship improvements should start with the quantity of water supplied in order for water users to accept the relationship in good faith and for the common goal to be achieved.

All interviewed respondents indicated that consumers are not happy with service delivery by the Blantyre Water Board and there is much to be done by the BWB in order to win the public's trust and attention. It was noted, however, that respondents were happy with the creation of Zone Offices within the Blantyre City Assembly but indicated that these Zones mostly serve as shorter-distance pay-points and front desks for queries and complaints. Consumers indicated that they are looking for a formal interface between the BWB and themselves in order for them to express their needs and views. Regarding internal staff participation in the BWB's decision making processes, all respondents indicated that the BWB management has to improve the way activities are conducted.

For instance, it was indicated that staff members are given targets to achieve within a specified timeframe, but these targets and plans are always top-down which results in them being unrealistic at times. This is because some staff members are not able to achieve the targets due to the lack of resources and support, regarding which they do not have much input. Respondents also recommended that the BWB's vision and mission statement must be communicated to staff time and again for the BWB to move together as a team in the process of service delivery. Respondents gave an example of Conditions of Service which are not made available to every staff and called for transparency within the BWB for the same to trickle down to the externals.

Interviews were also conducted with hotels, hospitals, associations, major water consumers in Blantyre City Assembly and Water User Associations in low-income areas. With regard to the elements that contribute to non-participation of the public in the Blantyre Water Board's activities, most respondents indicated that the poor management and administration style practiced by the BWB was a contribution to the non-participation of the public. All respondents interviewed indicated that the involvement of consumers can assist the BWB in the settlement of water bills, reducing illegal connections, reporting of thefts and burst pipes, in dealing with water billing problems, among others.

All respondents who were interviewed opted for dual meter reading for easy follow-up on the readings as consumers believe that some of the water bills are inflated and this leads to unjustified water disconnections. All respondents indicated that the Blantyre Water Board uses 'inform' as a strategy applied to pass on information to consumers. Respondents were of the view that the Blantyre Water Board should adopt a public participation policy and strategies which will enable the BWB to embark on consumer based management, using a participatory approach that would sensitize the public on issues affecting them.

This could include the organisation of open days, conduction of surveys for each project undertaken to source the public's views and comments and the co-option of various levels of water users/beneficiaries into the Blantyre Water Board's activities. This can enable the public to get involved right from the planning stages through to implementation and evaluation stages.

Regarding the modes of information transmission which the Blantyre Water Board mostly uses, most respondents indicated that the BWB uses radio and newspapers. The respondents pointed out that both radio and newspapers are not the best and ineffective mode of communication. Respondents indicated that not all water users are keen listeners of radio and important announcements are made when most of the consumers are at work. On the other hand, not all consumers have radios and with the proliferation of radio stations, it is difficult to catch the attention of consumers via radio unless all radio stations are used by the Blantyre Water Board. Most respondents indicated that the newspaper is an expensive mode of communication as consumers would have to afford to buy it on daily basis as they would not know when an important announcement would appear. Respondents suggested that different modes of communication, befitting the type of consumers, must be used.

Respondents suggested that for consumers in the low-income areas, community/public engagement would be the best option while those in the urban areas would need sensitization as well, but all radios, television and newspapers should be used in addition. On the matter of which group of stakeholders most frequently participate in the Blantyre Water Board's activities, respondents indicated that donors and staff members are the ones who participate the most. Respondents suggested that the Blantyre Water Board should ensure that water users are also represented as beneficiaries of the projects.

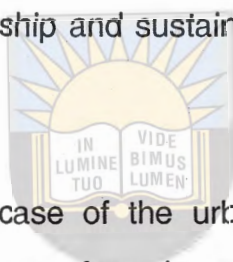
It was also observed that in areas where the water pressure was low or there was no water at all, some members of the public were breaking main pipes passing through their areas deliberately in order to get water and it could take weeks or months for the BWB to get information on the broken main pipes. This turned out to be expensive on the part of the BWB as it was part of the unaccounted for water. This showed how uncooperative the public were since they did not consider the water projects as their own.

The consumers indicated that they did not take the responsibility to report for broken pipes because the Blantyre Water Board was not making itself available to give an explanation for the shortage of water. In general, all respondents indicated that public participation which the Blantyre Water Board applies is not effective. The respondents also pointed out that the BWB staff takes long to assist when there is a problem or burst pipes and occasionally the public do not report burst pipes or faults because sometimes the BWB staff members seem not to care. It was also pointed out that the Blantyre Water Board takes a long time to explain the problems being faced to consumers when it fails to deliver services to the public, for common understanding of problems.

4.3.2 Discussion on data collected from the LWB staff and consumers

Respondents from the Lilongwe Water Board (LWB) which is in the central part of Malawi, indicated that water consumers from the low-income areas are involved in activities of the Lilongwe Water Board. This is the case because the Kiosk Management Unit which was established in 2007 has engaged the public to participate in the water related activities and let their voices be heard. It was reported that these consumers get involved from the planning stage up to the implementation stage and they are aware of problems being faced by the LWB and they are part of the team. The respondents indicated that this involvement has brought about understanding and unity between the LWB as a supplier of water and the consumers in low-income areas.

Respondents indicated that the involvement of water users in the low-income areas has improved a lot of aspects like the payments of water bills which stood at 95% of collection per month at the time of data collection. It was also reported that the dual meter reading is being implemented starting with the water kiosks, hence complaints regarding bills have also decreased. The involvement of the public has also reduced the theft of water pipes, vandalism and rejection of water projects which were common due to various reasons including political interferences and misunderstandings amongst stakeholders. It was learnt from the respondents that the public in the low-income areas are now supporting the LWB's efforts and that ownership and sustainability of the projects is currently being implemented.



It was also noted that the case of the urban areas is different to that of low-income areas. The consumers from the urban areas indicated that they are not as involved as they would like to be. Apart from fault reporting and bill enquiries, there is not much space and time for urban consumers to interact with the water supplier (LWB). Respondents also reported that the Lilongwe Water Board uses an informing approach through media. It was also indicated that management uses a top-down approach whereby decisions are made on top and channelled down for implementation without incorporating staff members' views. It was also reported that management does this because it gets mandates from the Government and implements them through the staff hence management sees no point in involving its staff too much. However, it was reported that the Lilongwe Water Board ensured that there are continuous improvements in public participation by increasing Water Users' Associations in the low-income areas and the formation of Zone offices to help reach out to the public, especially for the urban areas.

In conclusion, the respondents from the Lilongwe Water Board indicated that the LWB uses a top down approach with both staff and consumers from the urban areas indicating that they are ineffective since decisions are made for the people on their behalf and without their involvement. However, consumers from low-income areas indicated that they are happy with the participatory approach being applied by the LWB and are very supportive except for some respondents who had diverging views mostly on political grounds and personal interests.

4.3.3 Discussion of data collected from the NRWB staff and consumers

Respondents from the Northern Region Water Board (NRWB), which is a water utility institution situated in the northern part of Malawi, indicated similar views to that of the Lilongwe and the Blantyre Water Boards except in a few areas.

The respondents indicated that in the rural areas of the Northern Region, there is more interaction between the NRWB as a supplier of water and its consumers. The consumers participate in the NRWB activities through Community Liaison Groups and Water Users' Associations whose activities are coordinated by full-time employed Community Liaison/Mobilization Officers who manage community awareness, mobilization and engagement issues, apart from Customer Executives and Public Relations Managers.

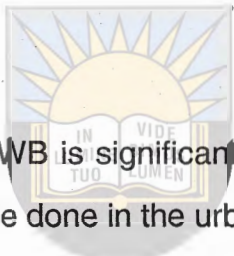
Most of the consumers interviewed from the rural areas expressed satisfaction with the delivery of service by the NRWB because they are part of the decisions made as they are involved in water related activities. Respondents interviewed from the urban areas expressed dissatisfaction mainly with water bills' management. It was indicated that most customers do not receive water bills or receive over-charged bills, amongst other problems. The consumers also indicated that the NRWB does not inform them even when there will be no water in a particular area. It was also reported that the Northern Region Water Board's staff only moves around the urban areas with a Public Address System when announcing water disconnection in order to influence the public to settle their bills.

In this case, consumers feel that they are only needed when it is for the benefit of the water board. It was also noted that consumers in the urban areas suffer more water shortages and sanitation problems which were supposed to be addressed by the NRW. Instead, they take them to the City Assembly Health Office for assistance. For instance, some individual water pipes in an area within the Mzuzu City were connected long time ago and by the time of the interviews it was reported that the taps were still dry. However, the respondents commended the NRW for the quality of water which they produce and pleaded for more efforts on the quantity of water since most of the locations around the city do not have water. It was also pointed out by the respondents in the urban areas that the NRW must embark on enhancing community sensitization and interface with the consumers on the ground in order to get their views and ideas, which can be helpful to the Northern Region Water Board.

Respondents from the NRW staff reported that the NRW involves its staff from the bottom level to the top level. This is done by sourcing views from the bottom, middle to the top level especially when creating the institutions/organisation's plans and other interventions. In this approach, views from almost all staff members are consolidated and these processes reinforce staff members' support, and allow them to own and sustain the NRW plans whilst enhancing teamwork.

The respondents indicated that, in the past, decisions and targets were made by top level management and the bottom level was just told to implement them. Currently, staff members are able to give their views on the actual problems being faced by consumers on the ground and give possible solutions since they work closely with them. Staff members are also able to take part in planning for the required resources in order for the institution's plans and targets to be achieved.

It was reported that this is done through a team which goes around interviewing staff from the bottom level up to the top level where the views are consolidated and debated upon for incorporation into the final plans for implementation. Respondents also indicated that this process of involving staff members has turned the Northern Region Water Board from a centralised to a decentralized way of decision making and management. It was observed from the findings that the Northern Region Water Board is doing very well at management level by involving and consulting its employees before coming up with plans and that all employees take part in and thus own these plans and are willing to implement them.

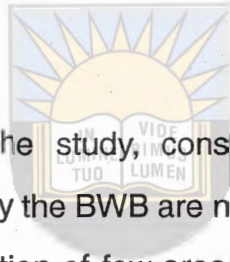


It was also noted that the NRWB is significantly involving its consumers in the rural areas but a lot needs to be done in the urban areas where consumers have a need to express their needs, to have frequent interactions with the water supplier and partake in the creation of solutions for the shortage of water which was reported to exist in most parts of the city.

4.4 Conclusion

From the findings, consumers reported that the Blantyre Water Board public participation strategies are ineffective while the BWB staff indicated that the public participation strategies are effective. It can be deduced from these contrasting views that there is a gap between the BWB and its consumers which means that the BWB is operating on a different front without knowledge of the feelings and perceptions of the beneficiaries. The Blantyre Water Board could be complacent with what it delivers while the intended output does not make any impact, hence, the existence and emergence of a number of social problems such as the rejection of water projects, vandalism, none settlement of water bills, amongst others.

In this case, beneficiaries feel unattended to while the BWB staff are satisfied that they are doing all they can to satisfy the beneficiaries. It is important for the Blantyre Water Board to know its strengths and weaknesses rather than being too complacent with its service delivery as per the findings and yet the perceived output does not meet the intended outcomes. The findings could also imply that water utilities take consumers for granted since they are monopoly institutions and it is common knowledge that whether consumers are involved or not, they would still need and buy water, for survival, from water utilities such as the BWB, the LWB and the NRWB since consumers have no choice as there is no other competitor in Malawi.



Based on the findings of the study, consumers perceive that the public participation strategies used by the BWB are not effective and service delivery is dissatisfactory with the exception of few areas. It was, therefore, concluded by consumers that the public participation strategies which the Blantyre Water Board applies do not help to sustain the interventions and projects implemented by the BWB. This chapter has discussed the analysed data and its interpretation. It paves the way for conclusions and recommendations to be made in the next last chapter of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data and offers an analysis of the findings from the data collected through questionnaires sent to respondents, interviews conducted and primary data collected through documentation and observation. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used for precision of the findings. Pie charts have been used to represent the quantitatively analysed data. The fundamental argument of this research is that there is a gap between the Blantyre Water Board (BWB) as the water supplier and the public it supplies water to, as beneficiaries, and the results presented and interpreted show whether this argument is relevant and valid or not.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

The findings of the quantitatively analysed data are presented from three (3) perspectives. The three (3) perspectives are the Blantyre Water Board staff, the Blantyre Water Board consumers and the comparison of the two, thus the BWB staff and consumers.

4.2.1 Pie charts on views from the Blantyre Water Board staff

Figure 1: Respondents' views on the understanding of public participation.

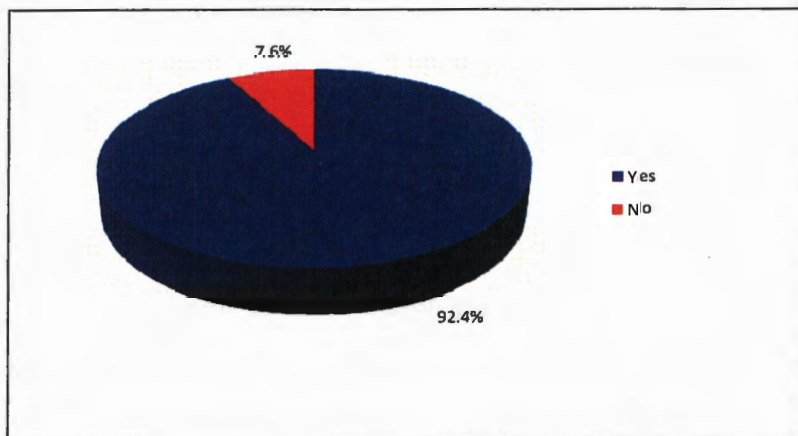


Figure (1) illustrates that 92.4% of the respondents from the Blantyre Water Board staff as an institution indicated that staff members are well aware of the public participation concept while 7.6% are not familiar with this concept.

Figure 2: Respondents' views on the importance of public participation to the Blantyre Water Board.

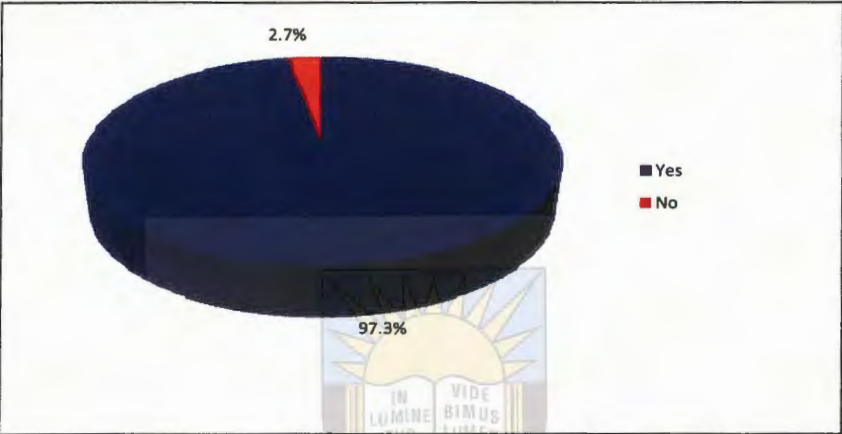


Figure (2) illustrates that 97.3% of the respondents from the Blantyre Water Board recognise the importance of public participation to the institution while 2.7% of the respondents indicated that public participation is not important to the institution.

Figure 3: Respondents' views on the BWB staff involvement in decision making processes of the Blantyre Water Board.

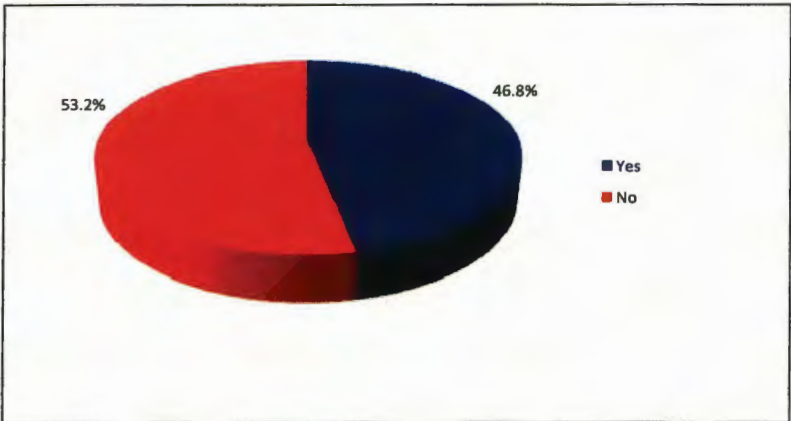


Figure (3) illustrates that 53.2% of respondents indicated that staff members of the Blantyre Water Board are not involved in decision making processes while 46.8% of the respondents indicated that staff members are involved.

Figure 4: Respondents' views on stages at which the BWB staff get involved in the decision making process.

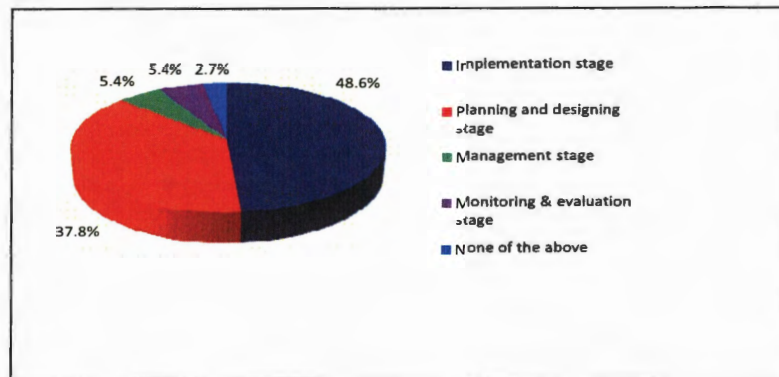


Figure (4) illustrates that most of the Blantyre Water Board's staff members get involved at the implementation stage, representing 48.6% of the respondents, with 37.8% indicating that staff members get involved at the planning and designing stage, 5.4% at the management stage and 5.4% at the monitoring and evaluation stage, while 2.7% of the respondents indicated that staff members are not involved at any stage of decision making process.

Figure 5: Respondents' views on the involvement of the public in the Blantyre Water Board's activities

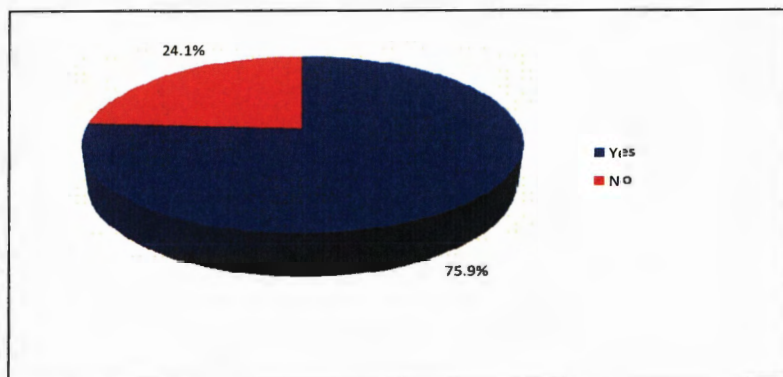


Figure (5) illustrates that 75.9% of the respondents accepted that the Blantyre Water Board does involve its public (stakeholders) in its activities while 24.1% of respondents were of the view that the public is not involved in the Blantyre Water Board's activities.

Figure 6: Respondents' views on public participation approaches which the Blantyre Water Board applies to its service delivery.

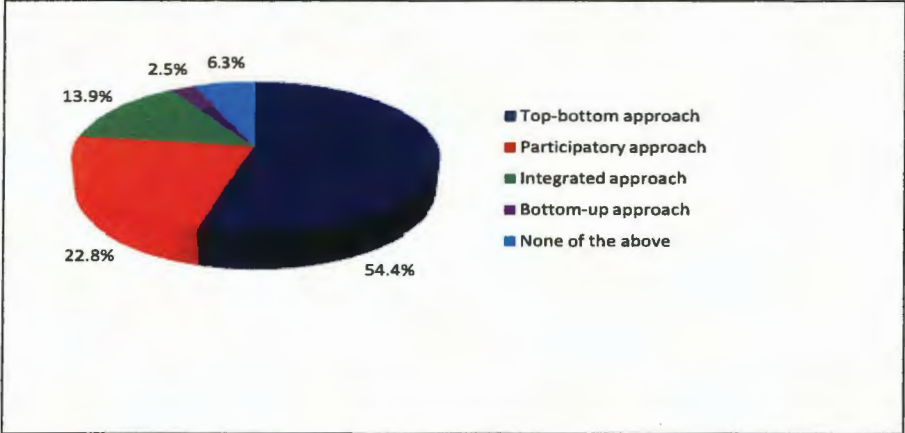


Figure (6) illustrates that 54.4% of the respondents believed that the Blantyre Water Board uses top-down approach in its service delivery with 22.8% of the respondents settling for the participatory approach. 13.9% of the respondents were of the view that the Blantyre Water Board uses an integrated approach, while 2.3% of the respondents settled for the bottom-up approach and 6.3% of the respondents indicated that none of the approaches mentioned are applicable to the BWB.

Figure 7: Respondents' views on the effectiveness of the approach chosen in Figure (6); the top down approach.

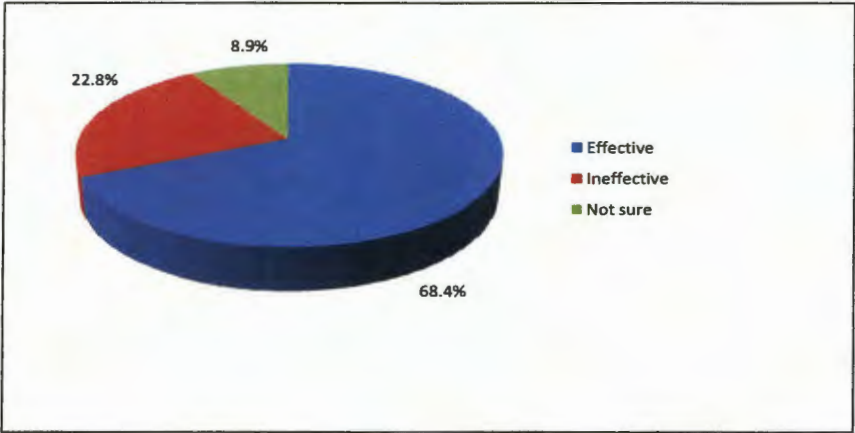


Figure (7) illustrates that 68.4% of respondents believed that the top-down approach being applied by the Blantyre Water Board is effective while 22.8% of respondents indicated that the top-bottom approach is ineffective and 8.9% of respondents were not sure of either the effectiveness of the approach in use or they did not even know which approach is being used by the Blantyre Water Board.

Figure 8: Respondents' views on the benefits of the participatory approach being used by the Blantyre Water Board.

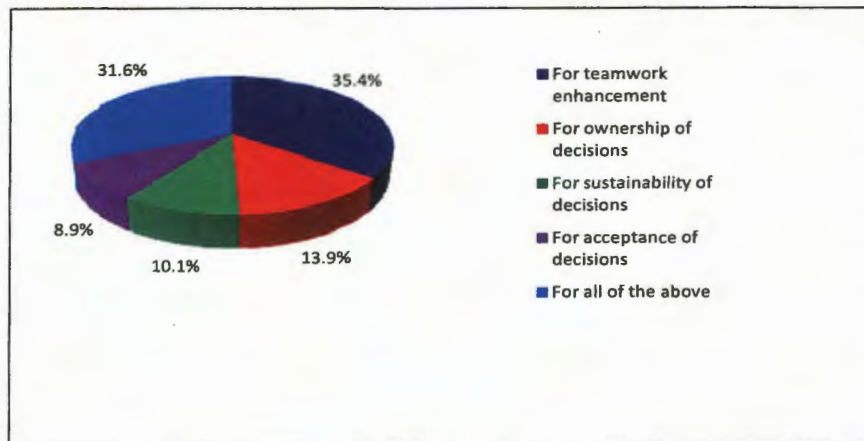


Figure (8) illustrates that the majority of respondents, at 35.4%, were of the view that the participatory approach being used by the Blantyre Water Board has improved team work with 13.9% of the respondents viewing the approach as being there for ownership of decisions. 10.1% of the respondents viewed the approach as important for the sustainability of decisions, 8.9% indicated that the approach has improved acceptance of decisions while 31.6% of respondents viewed the approach as important for all of the above mentioned elements.

Figure 9: Respondents' views on the BWB staff involvement in the creation of interventions, as the BWB staff members.

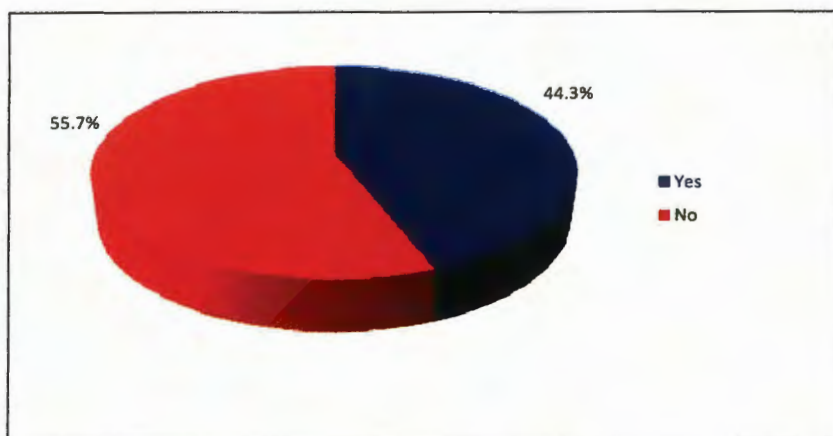


Figure (9) illustrates that 55.7% of the respondents indicated that they were involved by the BWB as staff members when creating interventions while 44.3% indicated that they were not involved.

Figure 10: Respondents' views on whether the BWB has public participation guidelines or strategies.

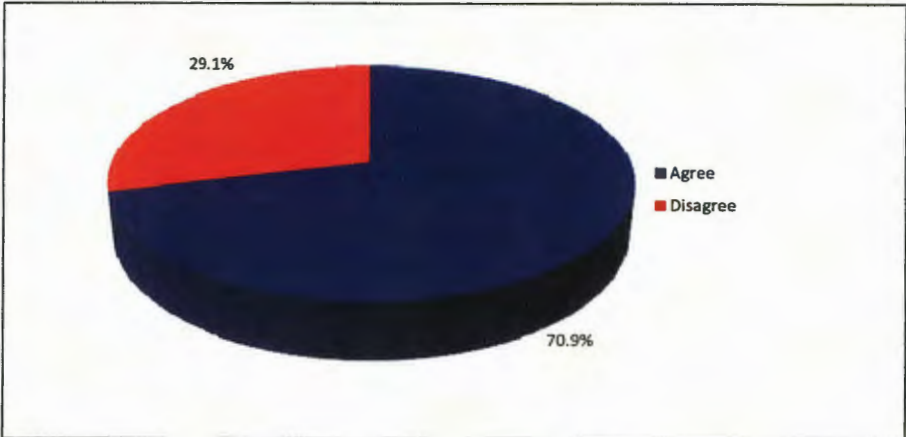


Figure (10) illustrates that 70.9% of the respondents indicated that the Blantyre Water Board has public participation guidelines while 29.1% indicated that the BWB does not have these public participation guidelines or strategies.

Figure 11: Respondents' views on whether the BWB abides by the demands of the Malawi Water Policy as one of the Legal Frameworks.

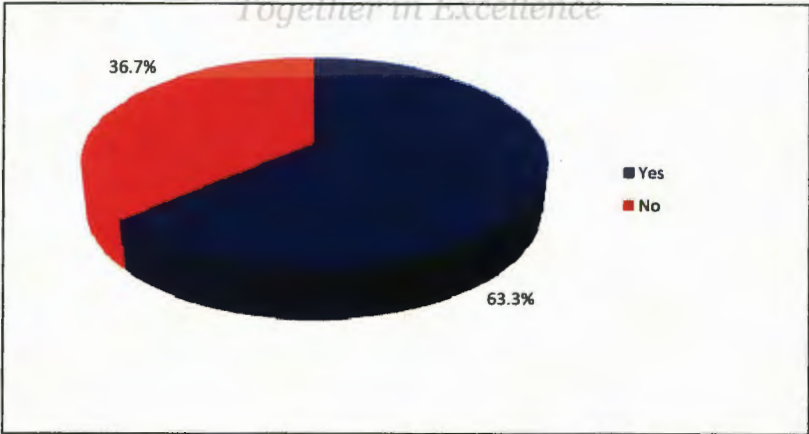


Figure (11) illustrates that 63.3% of the respondents indicated that the Blantyre Water Board does abide by the demands of the Malawi Water Policy as one of the Legal Frameworks while 36.7% were not in agreement with this.

Figure 12: Respondents' views on whether the BWB abides by the demand of the Millennium Development Goals as an international protocol.

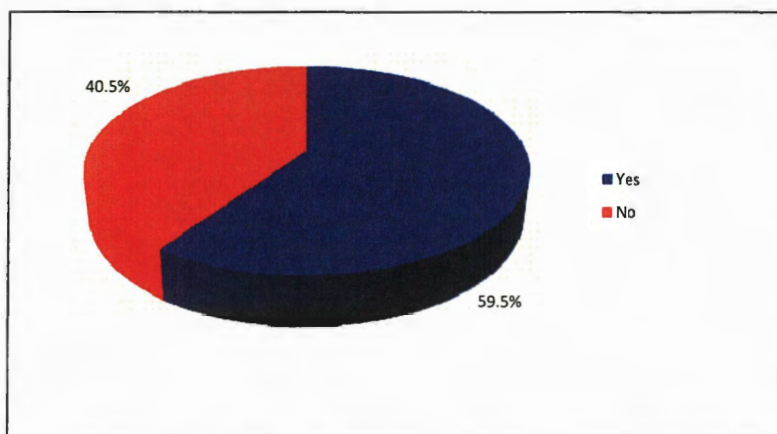


Figure (12) illustrates that 59.5% of respondents were of the view that the Blantyre Water Board abides by the demands of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) while 40.5% were of the view that the BWB does not abide by the demands of the MDGs.

4.2.2 Discussion of the Blantyre Water Board staff's perspective

Most of the Blantyre Water Board staff, at 92.4% of the respondents, indicated that they understand public participation. This could be true in the sense of knowing public participation theoretically and not practically. This can be proved by the fact that the respondents also indicated that the Blantyre Water Board uses a top-down approach as a public participation strategy and further indicated that this approach is effective. Jacobs and White (1999: 34-35) argue that the 'top-down' approach does not regard public participation as a necessary element to the attainment of sustainable and effective development. This argument by Jacobs and White justifies why the top-down approach cannot be effective in involving staff and the public in order for them to take part in an organisation's activities. Makuwira (2004: 76) also states that when organisations use a top-down approach they decide what is best for their citizens without giving them any sense of ownership in the systems to which they are introduced. This lack of sensitivity accounts for problems in and the failure of many projects and programmes.

Kinicki and Williams (2006: 206) view the top-down approach as an approach which goes together with a directive style of decision making. This style has a low level of tolerance for most staff in an organisation, especially concerning decision making. The proponents of the top-down approach are mostly concerned with technical details and task concerns more so than employees' feelings or contributions. Kinicki and Williams' (2006: 207) argument, therefore, disagrees with the BWB staff respondents who indicate that the top-down approach is effective and improves team work at the Blantyre Water Board, and involves them in the decision making process. The literature states that organisations which use the top down approach do not involve their staff in decision making but rather give them directives on tasks to be done which turns out to be ineffective for performance and development. The Blantyre Water Board Staff respondents also indicated that the BWB abides by the demands of Malawi Water Policy and Millennium Development Goals framework.

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This can also be argued because the Malawi Water Policy (MWNWP, 2005: vii) demands that all water boards must use a demand-driven approach where the water users and other stakeholders must be part of the decisions made. This is contrary to the top-down approach which is uni-directional and passive and does not encourage the active involvement of the public. The top-down approach, which is practiced by the BWB, is also against the demands of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) which advocates for the involvement of all stakeholders and a participatory approach to water supply.

4.2.3 Pie charts on views from consumers

Figure 13: Respondents' views on dual meter card reading, signing and helping with problems of incorrect water bills.

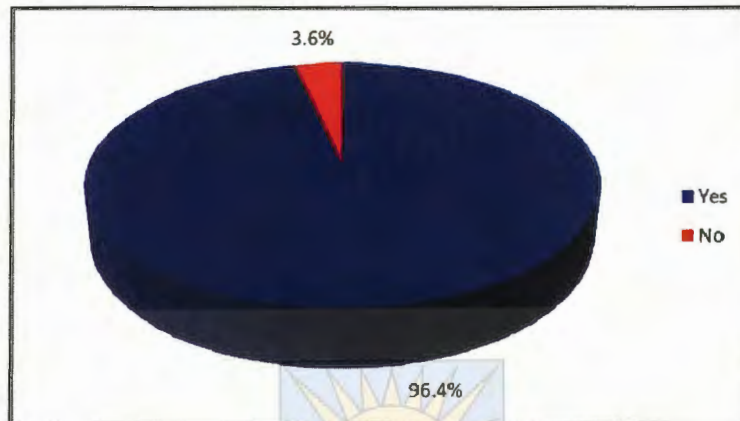


Figure (13) illustrates that 96.4% of the respondents (consumers) supported the dual meter reading and signing idea which would help in resolving the problems of incorrect water bills while 3.6% of the respondents were against it.

Figure 14: Respondents' views on the involvement of consumers in the BWB water projects and decisions affecting them.

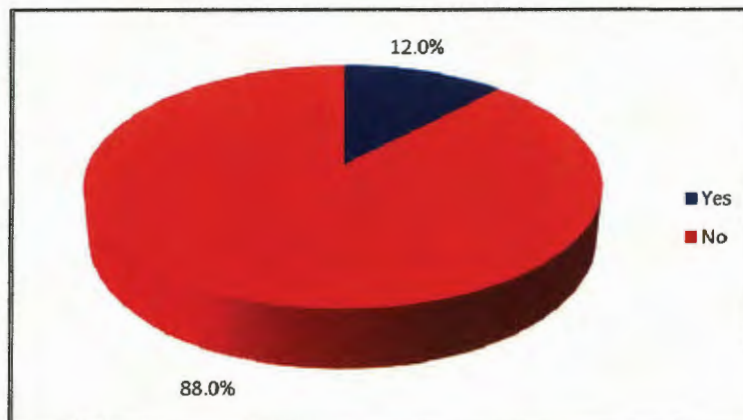


Figure (14) illustrates that 88.0% of respondents indicated that consumers are not involved in the Blantyre Water Board's activities and the decisions affecting them while 12.0% of the respondents were of the view that the BWB involves its consumers in its activities.

Figure 15: Respondents' views on the Blantyre Water Board's provision of prompt redress to the public's complaints and queries in its service delivery.

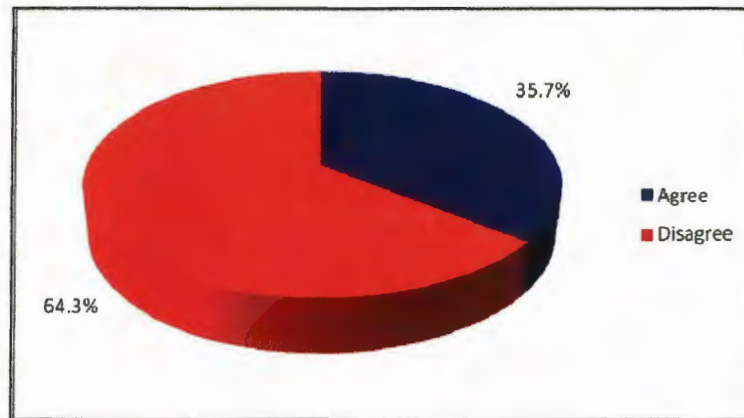


Figure (15) illustrates that 64.3% of respondents indicated that the Blantyre Water Board does not attend to public queries and complaints promptly in the process of its service delivery, while 35.7% of consumers indicated that the BWB provides prompt redress.

Figure 16: Respondents' views on which level of the water project cycle does the Blantyre Water Board involve the public.

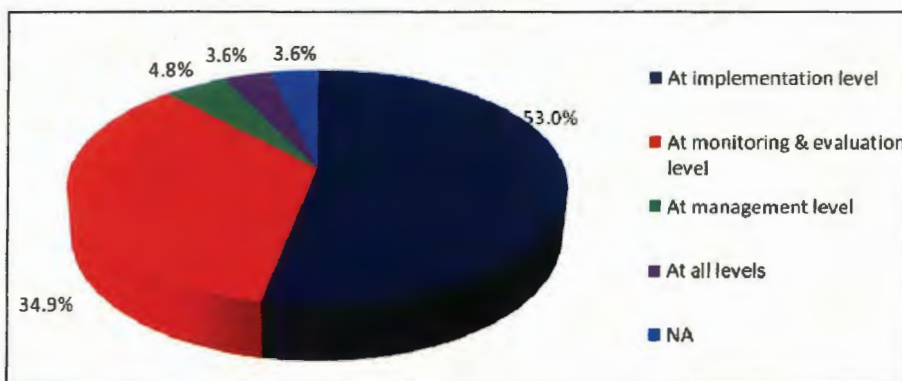


Figure (16) illustrates the views of respondents in relation to the level at which the public participates in the Blantyre Water Board's water project. The results indicate that 53.0% of respondents were of the view that the Blantyre Water Board involves its public at implementation level, with 34.9% of respondents settling for the monitoring and evaluation level and 4.8% for the management level. 3.6% maintained the view that the public participates at all levels and 3.6% of respondents indicated that the public is not involved at all.

Figure 17: Respondents' views on public participation strategies/guidelines applied by the Blantyre Water Board when forming the Board's interventions.

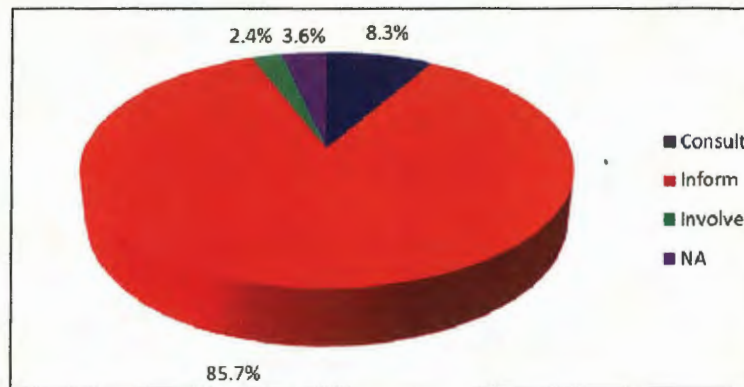


Figure (17) illustrates that 85.7% of respondents indicated that the Blantyre Water Board uses 'informing' as a strategy to involve the public it serves, with 8.3% of the respondents indicating 'consultation', 2.4% standing for involvement and 3.6% of the respondents representing none of the above.

Figure 18: Respondents' views on which group of stakeholders participates most significantly in the formation of the Blantyre Water Board's interventions.

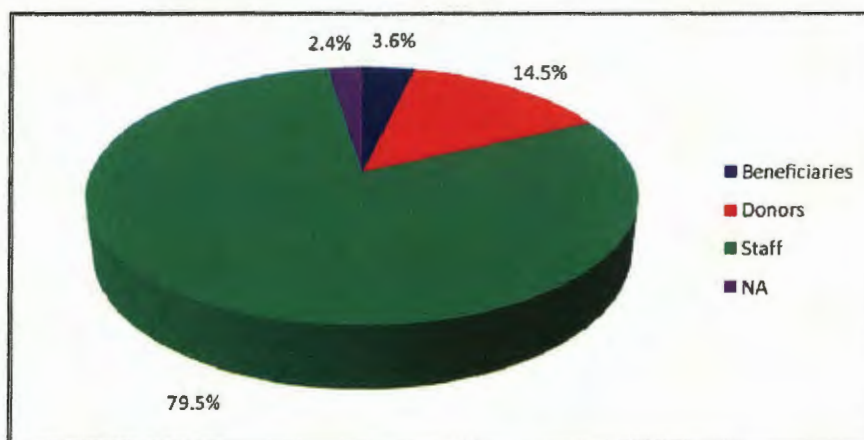


Figure (18) illustrates that 79.5% of the respondents indicated that the Blantyre Water Board involves its staff while 14.5% indicated that the BWB involves donors with 3.6% representing the involvement of beneficiaries. 2.4% of respondents indicated that the BWB does not involve the public at all when implementing its interventions.

Figure 19: Respondents' views on modes of information transmission which are used most often by the Blantyre Water Board.

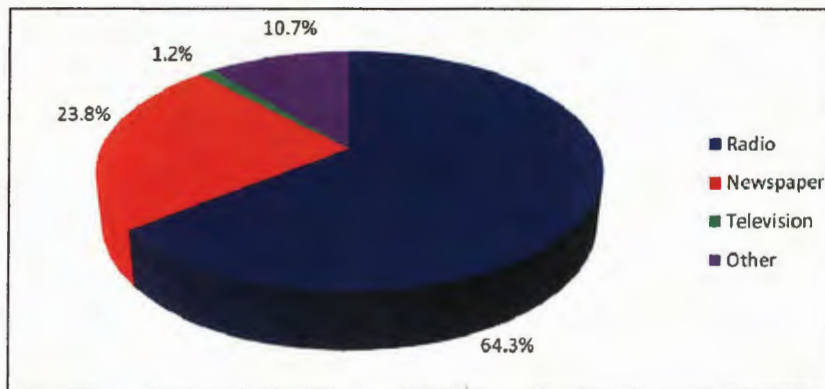


Figure (19) illustrates that most of the respondents at 64.3%, indicated that the Blantyre Water Board uses radio as a mode of information transmission, while 23.8% indicated that the BWB uses newspapers, and 1.2% indicated that the BWB uses television as a mode of communication. 10.7% indicated that the Blantyre Water Board uses other modes of information transmission apart from radio, newspaper and television.

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Figure 20: Respondents' views on the effectiveness of the mode of information transmission selected in Figure 19 above.

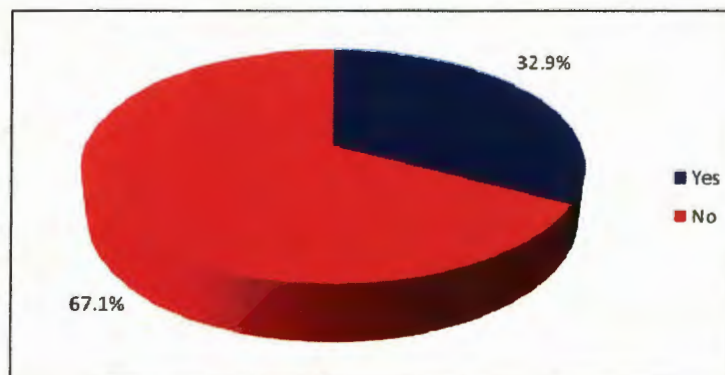


Figure (20) illustrates that the most popular mode of information transmission chosen in figure (19), which is 'radio', is not effective with 67.1% of respondents supporting this view while 32.9% indicated that the mode of information transmission used (radio) is effective.

Figure 21: Respondents' views on what consumers would like the Blantyre Water Board to do in order to engage its consumers in its activities.

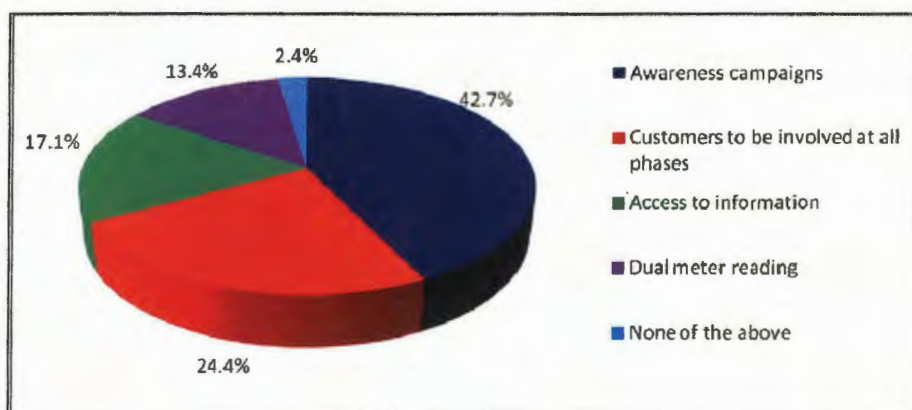


Figure (21) illustrates that 42.7% of respondents indicated that the Blantyre Water Board should embark on or enhance awareness campaigns in order to engage consumers in its activities. 24.4% of respondents opted for consumers to be involved at all phases of project implementation and 17.1% of the respondents opted for improvement on access to information, while 13.4% were for dual meter reading and 2.4% of the respondents chose neither option.

Figure 22: Respondents' views on whether consumers are satisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's service delivery.

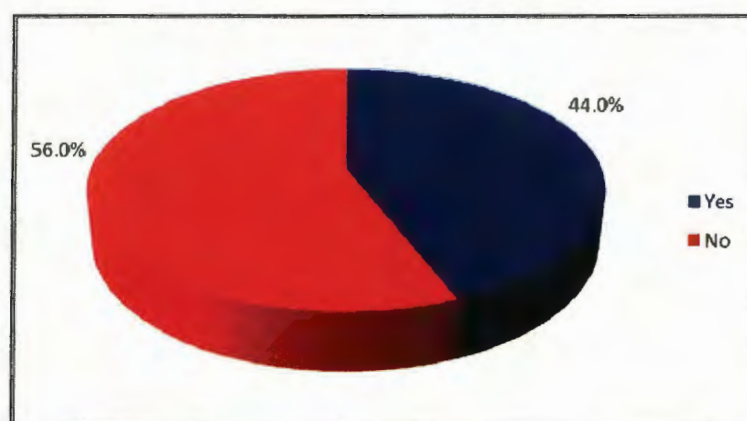


Figure (22) illustrates that 56% of respondents were of the view that consumers are not satisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's service delivery while 44% indicated that consumers are satisfied with the BWB's delivery of service.

Figure 23: Respondents' views on why most consumers are dissatisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's service delivery.

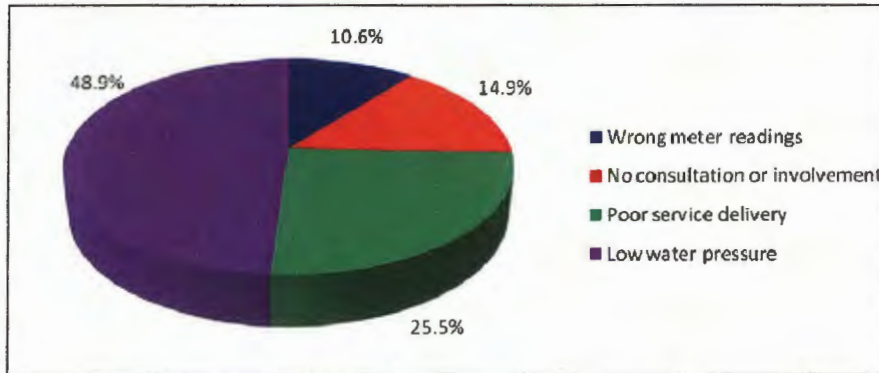


Figure (23) illustrates that 48.9% of the respondents indicated that most of the consumers are not satisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's service delivery due to the low water pressure with 25.5% indicating poor service delivery as a cause of dissatisfaction amongst consumers. 14.9% indicated that lack of consultation and public involvement is also a contributing factor to this dissatisfaction and 10.6% of the respondents indicated that incorrect meter reading is a cause of dissatisfaction.

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Figure 24: Respondents' (consumers) views on the effectiveness of the Blantyre Water Board's public participation strategies.

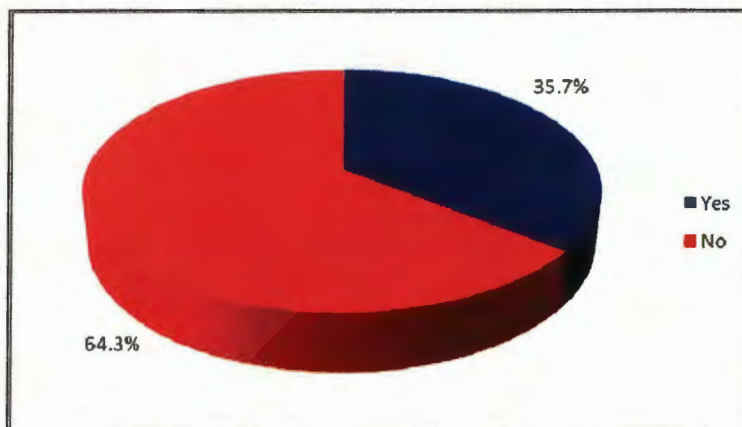


Figure (24) illustrates that 64.3% of the respondents indicated that public participation strategies which are applied by the Blantyre Water Board are not effective while 35.7% of the respondents indicated that these strategies are effective.

4.2.4 Discussion on consumers' perspective

From the perspective of consumers, as respondents, it can be deduced that they are not satisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's approach to public participation or the strategies it uses. The consumers indicated that the 'informing' approach which the BWB uses in communicating with consumers is not effective. Consumers opted for community engagement and more publicity in order to voice their views. It can also be noted that the respondents do not like being involved in the Blantyre Water Board's activities at implementation level but prefer involvement at all stages, which is the essence of public participation.

4.2.5 Comparisons and discussion of both staff and consumers' responses

The following graphs show comparative responses between the BWB staff and its consumers for those questions which relate to both and were similar.

Figure 25: Respondents' views (both staff and consumers) on whether or not public participation can help the BWB in settlement of water bills.

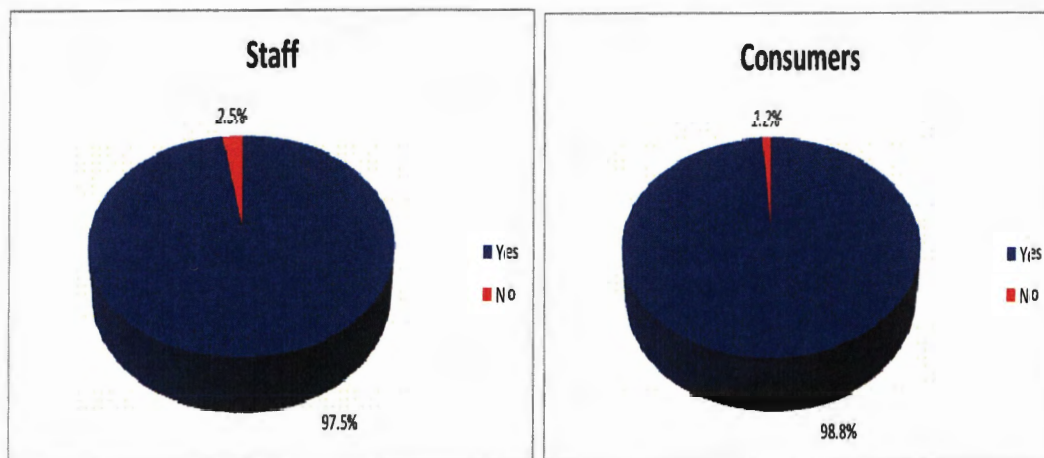


Figure (25) illustrates that both the BWB staff and consumers supported the idea that public participation can help the Blantyre Water Board in encouraging consumers to settle their water bills with 77 respondents out of 79 the BWB staff respondents standing in favour of the idea, while 83 respondents out of 84 consumers respond in favour of the idea, thus representing 97.5% and 98.8% positive responses respectively.

Figure 26: Respondents' views (both staff and consumers) on whether or not public participation can help the BWB in reducing illegal connections.

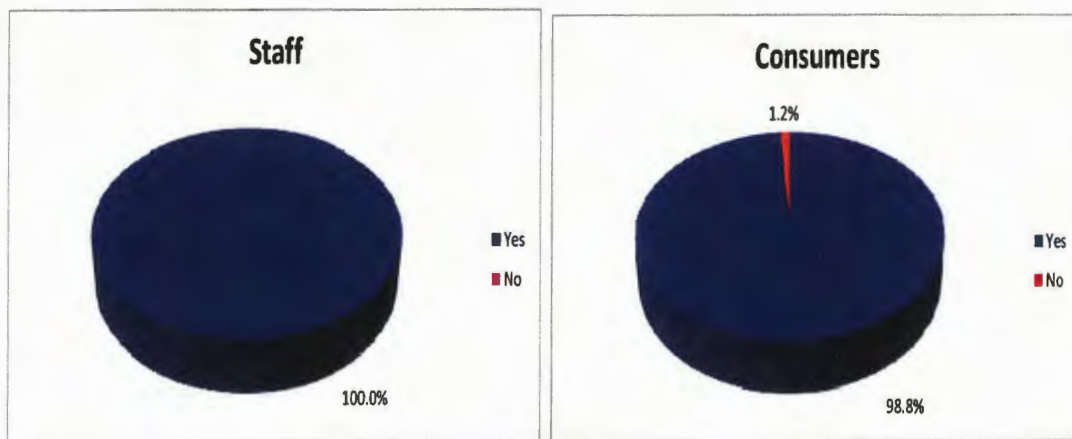


Figure (26) illustrates that both the BWB staff and consumers supported the idea that public participation can help the Blantyre Water Board reduce illegal connections with 100% of the BWB staff respondents were in favour of the idea and 83 out of 84 consumer respondents were also in support of the idea, thus representing 98.8% of consumer respondents.

Figure 27: Respondents' views (both BWB staff and consumers) on elements which contribute to non-participation of the public in the Board's activities.

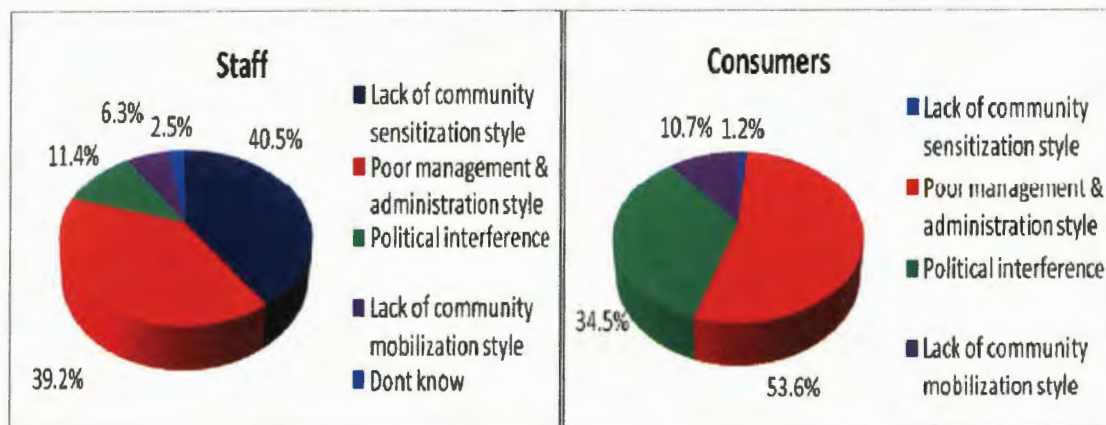


Figure (27) illustrates that both BWB staff and consumers indicated poor management and administration style being the biggest problem or hindrance which contributes to non-participation of the public in the Board's activities. The results indicated that 39.2% of the BWB staff members were of this view while 53.6% of consumers had this view.

Other emerging contributing elements were political interference being perceived as a hindrance to public participation especially by consumers at 34.4% and BWB staff viewing lack of best community sensitization styles as a major hindrance with respondents falling at 40.5%.

Figure 28: Respondents' views on whether the BWB provides information to the public it serves or not.

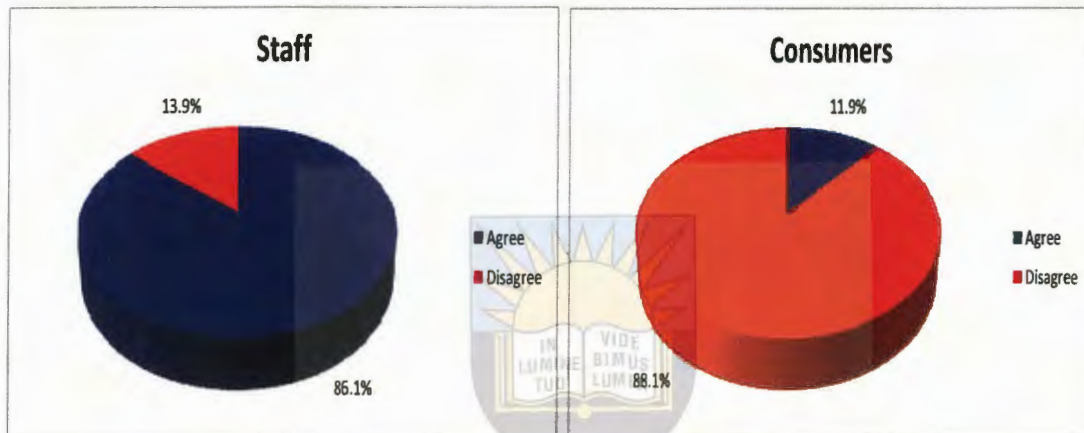


Figure (28) illustrates that the BWB staff agreed that the Blantyre Water Board provides information to the public it serves with 68 out of 79 respondents, representing 86.1%, supporting this point while 74 out of 84 consumer respondents disagreed with the point that the BWB provides information to the public it serves. This represents 88.1% of consumers in disagreement with the notion.

Figure 29: Respondents' views on how often the BWB provides information to the public it serves

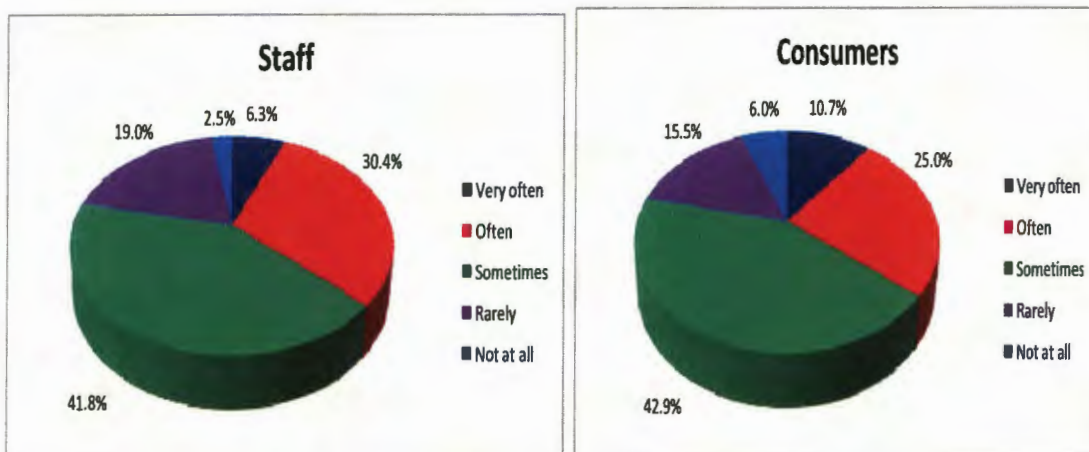


Figure (29) illustrates that both the Blantyre Water Board staff and consumers were of the view that the BWB 'sometimes' provides information to the public it serves with 41.8% of the BWB staff holding this view, and 42.9% of consumers supporting it.

Figure 30: Respondents' views on whether the BWB involves the public in its activities or not.

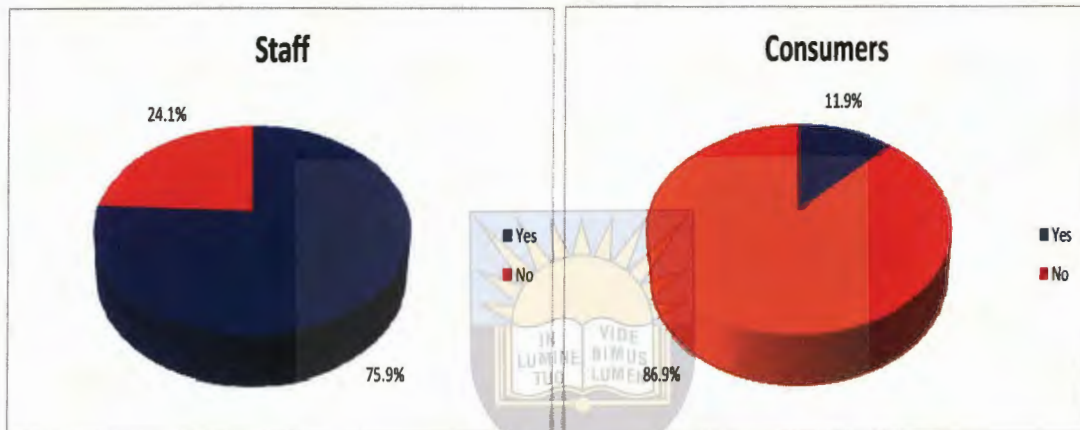
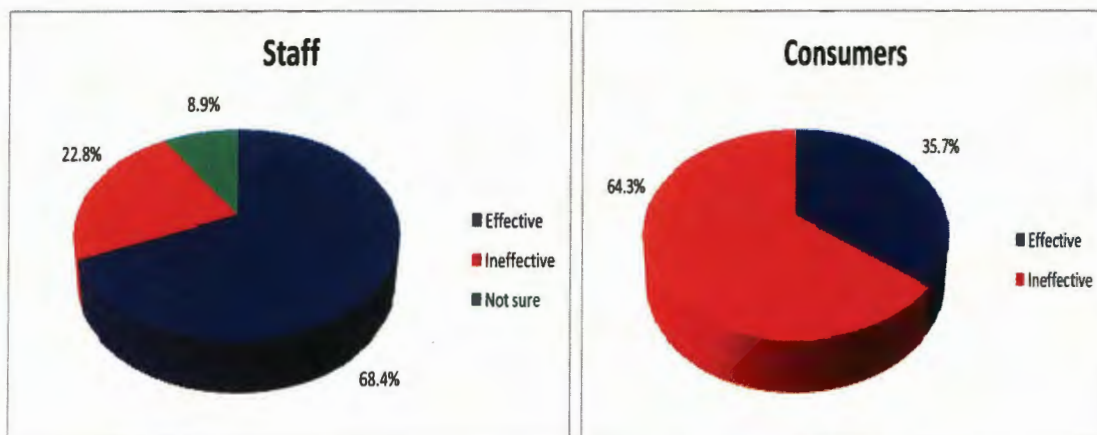


Figure (30) illustrates that the BWB staff were in agreement that the Blantyre Water Board involves the public in its activities with 60 of the 79 (75, 9%) respondents in agreement. 73 out of 84 (86.9%) consumer respondents indicated that the BWB does not involve the public in its activities.

Figure 31: Respondents' views on the effectiveness of the top-down approach used by the BWB.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions and pertinent recommendations based on the findings of the study. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of public participation strategies employed in water supply in the case of the Blantyre Water Board in Malawi. The central research objectives were to assess the extent to which the BWB public participation policies and strategies have contributed towards the sustainability of public involvement in water programmes or projects in general and to identify major challenges that affect public participation in the provision of water in the Blantyre City Assembly. The study was guided by a management and administration theory which has been explicated in chapter two of this study. It advocates for organisations' maintenance of good relations with stakeholders outside it and with whom the institution regularly interact for maintenance of a state of equilibrium in participation for water service provision.

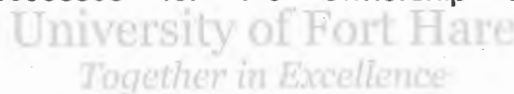
The first objective entails the assessment of the extent to which the Blantyre Water Board public participation strategies have contributed towards the sustainability of public involvement in water programmes or projects in general. To achieve this objective, data was collected from the BWB consumers as beneficiaries in order to identify if any strategies applied by the BWB were assisting them to participate in the BWB's programmes or projects. Data was also collected from BWB staff members in order to assess their perceptions of the public participation strategies applied by the BWB. The strategies used by BWB and assessed were radio, newspapers, television, front desks, zone offices and Water Users' Associations (WUAs). The consumers felt that the BWB public participation strategies applied by the BWB were top-down which are mostly used to inform the public and not to encourage their participation.

However, this was with the exception of some low-income areas where WUAs exist and accommodate water users in these areas in the participation in some water related activities. It was, therefore, found that the Blantyre Water Board strategies were not promoting public participation in the BWB's programmes or projects hence these strategies brought minimal contributions towards sustainability of involvement in water activities and were rated ineffective and unsatisfactory.

The second objective focused on finding major challenges that affect public participation in the provision of water in the Blantyre City Assembly (BCA). Data was collected from both the BWB staff and consumers and the research found out that the major challenges hampering public participation were poor management and administration styles being practiced by the BWB, lack of community sensitization and political interference. There exists a need for the BWB to use a bottom-up or participatory approach in order to involve the public in water related programmes. Once this is adopted, some of the solutions to the challenges discovered can best be arrived at together with the water users and sustained as the public will be able to own solutions and sustain the projects. The public can thus also act as a monitor and evaluator of activities or programmes happening behind the scenes of the Blantyre Water Board.

The first chapter of this research study presented the background of the study, which deals with introducing the reader to the concept of the study under review and has briefly emphasised the necessity of using or employing a public participation approach to the supply of water in order to get the public involved so as to enhance service delivery. It also included the statement of the problem of the study, the objectives, and significance of the research study, delimitations, ethical considerations and outline of the dissertation.

The second chapter dealt with the literature review of the study. This chapter provided different works of literature by a number of sources to prove that the topic under discussion is critical and that it has to be addressed to conform to the needs of the public or consumers. The literature review is composed of a collection of distinct authors who have discussed public participation as a discourse as well as a social problem in a number of areas including water supply. The literature review has tried to prove that development cannot be achieved without the popular support and full participation of the public and that social and economic conditions cannot be improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of people. The chapter, therefore, concluded that there must be an unfolding of organisations' processes and policies to accommodate freedom of opinions, tolerate differences and accept consensus on implemented activities and in decision-making processes for the ownership and sustainability of developments.



Chapter three provided an explanation of the research design and methodology that were followed during the data collection process in a case study of the Blantyre Water Board. The chapter discussed, in detail, the process followed to collect the data for this study, the research techniques applied, the process of data analyses and the methods applied as well as the limitations that were encountered during the data collection period.

Chapter four dealt with data presentation and provided an analysis of the findings and it is deduced in the chapter and from the findings that there is a gap between the Blantyre Water Board and its consumers. This is evidenced from the fact that the findings revealed that the BWB believes that consumers are satisfied with the strategies currently applied and yet, in contrast, the intended consumers indicated that they are not satisfied.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the issues raised by the Blantyre Water Board consumers and staff, the following recommendations are drawn:

5.2.1 Develop regular consumer needs and satisfaction mechanism

In cognizance of the fact that the demand-driven approach, which is recommended by the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development through the Malawi National Water Policy, allows consumers to participate in influencing what kind of service meets consumers' expectations, it is, therefore, important to gather consumer information about the service rendered. It can, thus be argued that success, through service delivery by water utilities or by the Blantyre Water Board in particular, should be measured by how satisfied consumers are with the service delivered. In this regard, the study recommends that the Blantyre Water Board should develop regular consumer needs and satisfaction assessments, by conducting consumer satisfaction surveys through interviews or questionnaires at least every six months.

These could be done through semi-structured interviews held with individuals in order to obtain representative information, and key spokespersons to obtain specialized information or groups to obtain general community information. The BWB should always budget for these activities for purposes of continuity. The findings of the regular surveys can help the BWB improve its water supply and even the public participation strategies which can suit the consumers' needs. These exercises can also create platforms for dialogue which will, in turn, allow consumers to bring their observations, concerns and suggestions to the attention of the BWB. Furthermore, this can enhance trust, cooperation and the quality of decisions, outputs and outcomes.

5.2.2 Improve information dissemination strategies

Information is power and it enables people to make quality decisions about services. This is critically important, even in the provision of basic services to consumers. If information is kept away from consumers, they cannot know wrong from right as only an informed public is able to make informed decisions and contribute positively towards development, which includes water related activities. The benefits of information flows far outweigh the costs associated with information asymmetry, which eventually hampers efficient delivery of basic services. The respondents indicated that the BWB does not communicate the new interventions or programmes being implemented or problems being faced by the BWB to them.



It is recommended, herein, that the BWB adopt new forms of information dissemination like newsletters which should give updates on initiatives being developed and upcoming programmes or projects while avoiding technical jargon and providing positive and negative facts about the initiatives underway. They must also supply contact details for the public to be free to comment and they must embark on community group presentations where the BWB should liaise with community leaders to take advantage of stakeholder groups that are already assembled for their own purposes (such as traditional authority meetings) for dissemination of information to more marginalized groups which can be followed up by question and answer sessions.

The BWB should also embark on public meetings which should be held as open gatherings and used to present information and exchange views on a specific aspect of an initiative as well as open houses/open days which should be held at a local venue during pre-established hours that are convenient for the public. At such meetings, the BWB should ensure the use of displays, printed materials and the organization of competent staff to answer questions, record and discuss issues.

According to most respondents, the most preferred methods are public meetings. Regular meetings and interactions with the communities should also be enhanced or renewed where they are non-existent. Furthermore, in order to deliver more consumer responsive services to communities, the BWB should intensify its communication strategies. For instance, in addition to the use of only radios and newspapers for informing the public, the BWB should be creative enough to interact with customers through phone-in programmes where questions could be asked by the public and answered immediately, and clarifications be made accordingly. The Blantyre Water Board should also develop a customer charter that provides an avenue for the communication of any concerns existing within the public.

5.2.3 Public involvement in water supply

The majority of respondents reported that they are remotely involved in the activities of the Blantyre Water Board as far as the decision-making process is concerned. It was reported that the BWB makes most decisions without involving consumers who are the beneficiaries of the service delivered. This does not only marginalise communities but also disempowers them and reduces their ability to actively engage with the BWB in identifying critical needs and diminishes their potential to influence the decisions made.

It is, therefore, imperative that the BWB involves its consumers in making decisions that affect them in water related activities by organising public meetings where decisions should be discussed and agreed upon in unity and consumers should be allowed to express their concerns in an unhindered fashion. With such contact and dialogue, conflicts and misunderstandings between the Blantyre Water Board and consumers and other stakeholders, like politicians, can be reduced. The end result of this can be increased acceptance, ownership and sustainability of the interventions and projects as a shared ownership of decisions leads to enhanced accountability and better service delivery.

5.2.4 Establish water community liaison groups in the urban areas

The Blantyre Water Board should start paying attention to and involving its consumers, especially those in the urban areas who do not have established water associations like Water Users' Associations. The BWB should form community liaison groups comprised of people who represent various interests, perspectives and fields of expertise in order to discuss needs and concerns of a similar nature, relating to a water supply topic under discussion or of concern. The group should be formed to advise on a particular initiative and should represent all role-players. This could entail organising entities that deal with similar activities to form one focus group. For instance, government schools, private schools, private sector organisations in general, hotels, and hospitals, amongst others.

With such an establishment, it could be easier for the BWB to reach out to such groups and discuss their water related problems and proposed solutions and gain their cooperation and support. Just as the Malawi National Water Policy advocates for demand driven water services and does not select a category of people but includes all consumers, so too should the Blantyre Water Board, as it is also guided by this legal framework.

5.2.5 Improve and strengthen capacity of staff

The study established that most consumers complain that faults were not attended to promptly and their water meters were not read. It is imperative that the BWB invests in the capacity building of its staff in customer relations and honesty in handling work related issues. The BWB staff should also be oriented towards public participation concepts and application as their responses showed that they are not clear about the discourse. This could be done by sending staff for training or giving them on-the-job training through externally sourced experts.

It is advisable for the Blantyre Water Board to consider the recommendations raised here. For, once the public participation strategies applied are effectible and are implemented effectively, there could be numerous of benefits for the BWB. Some of these are: the gathering and utilization of local (indigenous) knowledge from different perspectives and interests; public awareness creation; public empowerment; project ownership; further development; creation of new learning platforms; demonstration effect; community building; sustainability of policies and strategies; cost recovery; assurance that government policies are implemented properly and meaningfully; public initiatives in monitoring and evaluation as well as conflict resolution.

5.3 Scope for further research

This study contributes to the existing body of empirical work that relates to public participation as a discourse and water supply in Malawi. Although the findings of the study cannot be generalised to all other water boards in Malawi, they have provided an insight into issues that water users, as consumers of the water supplied, grapple with. As respondents indicated, political interference is one of the hindrances to consumer participation in water supply activities. Thus, there exists a need to investigate what really prevents the political will to flourish in the implementation of some water supply projects, even though the Malawi Constitution allows all Malawians the freedom of expression and association.

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ANNEXURE A: PERMISSION LETTER

To : TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
FROM : GRACE P.K. KHOMBA
DATE : FEBRUARY, 2010
SUBJECT : REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT
RESEARCH

Reference is made to the subject mentioned above.

Permission is hereby requested for student, G.P.K. Khomba, Student Number 200906172 from the Faculty of Management and Commerce in the Department of Public Administration with the University of Fort Hare to conduct research in your institution or community.

The research under study is entitled "An assessment of the public participation strategies in the provision of water in Malawi: the case study of the Blantyre Water Board" in the Southern Region of Malawi. The study is conducted in partial fulfillment of the dissertation for a Masters Degree in Public Administration with the University of Fort Hare. The findings of the study will be made available on request after completion.

For more information, please feel free to contact the researcher on 0888867378.

Thank You,

GRACE P.K. KHOMBA

ANNEXURE B: COVERING LETTER

TO : PARTICIPANTS
FROM : GRACE P.K. KHOMBA
DATE : FEBRUARY, 2010
SUBJECT : RESEARCH INTERVIEWS AND DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Reference is being made to the above subject.

Thank you very much for taking some of your valuable time to participate in this research project about "An assessment of the public participation strategies in the provision of water in Malawi: the case study of the Blantyre Water Board" in the Southern Region of Malawi.

The study is conducted by G.P. Khomba in partial fulfillment of the dissertation for a Masters Degree in Public Administration with the University of Fort Hare.

As a staff member of Blantyre Water Board and the community, your ideas and judgment are extremely important. As a participant in this study, all your feedback will be treated confidentially and your identity will not be disclosed during the analysis. The information will only be used for the purposes of the research project.

The interview will take about 10-15 minutes of your time to complete and should you have any queries please feel free to contact the researcher on 0888867378. The findings of the study will be made available on request after completion.

Thank you,

GRACE P.K. KHOMBA

ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEWS' QUESTIONS

1. Which public participation strategies are applied by the Blantyre Water Board?
2. Are you, as the Blantyre Water Board's staff/consumer involved in the BWB decision making process regarding water supply and affecting you?
3. At which stage(s) of decision making process of the Blantyre Water Board do you get involved?
4. At what level would you like to be involved in decision making process of the Blantyre Water Board?
5. Do you think the Blantyre Water Board involves the public in its activities?
6. Which of the following elements contribute to non-participation of the public in the Blantyre Water Board's activities: political interference; poor Management and Administration style and lack of community sensitization style?
7. How frequent does the Blantyre Water Board provide information to the public in its process of service delivery?
8. Does the BWB¹ abide to the demands of the Malawi Water Policy as one of the Legal Frameworks which stresses on demand driven/participatory approach in decisions/water activities/projects in water supply?
9. Do you think the participation of the public in the BWB's activities can help in settlement of water bills; in reduction of illegal connections; in acceptance of water projects like formation of Water Users' Associations and in reporting of thefts and burst pipes?
10. How frequent does the Blantyre Water Board provide information to the public it serves in its activities?
11. Does BWB consult; inform; involve or give access to information to the public when forming interventions² like Water Users' Associations?³

¹ The Blantyre Water Board

² Interventions: Actions taken to improve service delivery e.g. water projects, water pump laying extensions, etc

12. Which group of stakeholders mostly participates in formation of the BWB's interventions?
13. Which of the following modes of information transmission is mostly used by the BWB: radio, newspaper; television or front desks?
14. Does the BWB uses bottom-up approach; top-bottom approach or integrated approach in the delivery of its activities?
15. Are you satisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's delivery of water as a staff or consumer?
16. Do you think public participation strategies which the BWB uses are effective or not?



-The end-

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³ Water Users' Associations: Community managed organisations or associations owned by the community with help from the water boards which guarantees much more community participation and social responsibility like ploughing back to the communities in the form of social and economic improvements i.e employment.

ANNEXURE D: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE BWB STAFF

Questionnaire number :

Date :

A. KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES *(tick your preference)*

A.1 Do you understand the term public participation?

1. Yes
2. No

A.2 Which public participation strategies do you know?

1. Passive participation
2. Consultative participation
3. Interactive participation
4. Not too sure
5. None of the above

A.3 Is public participation important to you as an individual?

1. Yes
2. No

A.4 Do you think public participation is important to the Blantyre Water Board?

1. Yes
2. No

A.4a Are you involved in decision making process?

1. Yes
2. No

A.4b At which stage(s) of decision-making process of the Blantyre Water Board do you get involved?

1. Planning and designing stage
2. Implementation stage
3. Management stage
4. Monitoring and Evaluation stage
5. None of the above

- A.4b Do you contribute effectively at the stage(s) you get involved in?
1. Yes
 2. No
- A.5 At what level would you like to be involved in decision making processes of the Blantyre Water Board?
1. At planning and designing level
 2. At implementation level
 3. At management level
 4. At monitoring and evaluation level
 5. At all levels

B. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES IN THE BLANTYRE WATER BOARD
(tick your preference)

- B.1 Does the Blantyre Water Board involve the public in its activities?
1. Yes
 2. No
- B.2 Which of the following public participation approaches does the Blantyre Water Board applies in its activities?
1. Bottom-up approach
 2. Top-bottom approach
 3. Integrated approach
 4. Participatory approach
 5. None of the above
- B.3 How effective is the participatory approach chosen above?
1. Very effective
 2. Effective
 3. Ineffective
 4. Very ineffective
 5. Not sure
- B.4 What are the benefits of participatory approach chosen in B.2?
1. For sustainability of decisions
 2. For ownership of decisions
 3. For acceptance of decisions
 4. For teamwork enhancement
 5. For all of the above.....

B.5 As the Blantyre Water Board staff, are you involved in coming up with interventions?⁴

1. Yes
2. No

B.6 The Blantyre Water Board has guidelines/principles/strategies for public participation. Do you agree with this statement or not?

1. Totally agree
2. Agree
3. Partially agree
4. Partially disagree
5. Totally disagree

B.7 The Blantyre Water Board has public participation strategies but they are not followed. Do you agree with this statement or not?

1. Totally agree
2. Agree
3. Partially agree
4. Partially disagree
5. Totally disagree



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C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CHALLENGES
(tick your preference)

C.1 Which of the following elements contribute to non-participation of the public in the Blantyre Water Board's activities?

1. Political interference
2. Poor Management and Administration style
3. Lack of community sensitization style
4. Lack of community mobilization style
5. Other (please specify).....

C.2 The Blantyre Water Board provides information to the public it serves in its process of service delivery. Do you agree with this statement or not?

1. Totally agree
2. Agree
3. Partially agree
4. Partially disagree
5. Totally disagree

⁴ Interventions: Actions taken to improve service delivery e.g. water projects, water pump laying extensions, etc

C.3 How frequent does the Blantyre Water Board provide information to the public in it serves in its process of service delivery?

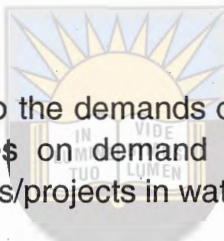
1. Very often
2. Often
3. Sometimes
4. Rarely
5. Not at all

C.4 Does the BWB⁵ abide to the demands of the Malawi Water Policy as one of the Legal Frameworks which stresses on demand driven/participatory approach in decisions/water activities/projects in water supply?

1. Yes
2. No

C.5 Does the BWB abide to the demands of the ⁶MDGs as an International Protocol which stresses on demand driven/participatory approach in decisions/water activities/projects in water supply?

1. Yes
2. No



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C.6 Do you think the participation of the public in the Blantyre Water Board's activities can help in settlement of water bills?

1. Yes
2. No

C.7 Do you think the participation of the public in the BWB's activities can help in reduction of illegal connections?

1. Yes
2. No

C.8 Do you think the participation of the public in the BWB's activities can help in acceptance of water projects like formation of Water Users' Associations?⁷

1. Yes
2. No

⁵ The Blantyre Water Board

⁶ Millennium Development Goals

⁷ Water Users' Associations: Community managed organisations or associations owned by the community with help from the water boards which guarantees much more community participation and social responsibility like ploughing back to the communities in the form of social and economic improvements i.e employment.

C.9 Do you think the participation of the public in the Blantyre Water Board's activities can help in reporting of thefts and burst pipes?

1. Yes
2. No

-The end-



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ANNEXURE E: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE THE BWB CONSUMERS

Questionnaire number :

Date :

House No. :

A. KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (please tick your preference)

A.1 Which of the following elements contribute to non-participation of the public in the Blantyre Water Board's activities?

- 1 Political interference;
- 2 Poor Management and Administration style;
- 3 Lack of community sensitization style
- 4 Lack of community mobilization style
- 5 Other (please specify).....

A.2 The Blantyre Water Board provides information to the public it serves in its service delivery. Do you agree with this statement or not?

1. Totally agree
2. Agree
3. Partially agree
4. Partially disagree
5. Totally disagree

A.3 How frequent does the Blantyre Water Board provide information to the public it serves in its activities?

1. Very often
2. Often
3. Sometimes
4. Rarely
5. Not at all

A.4 Do you think that the involvement of the consumers in the BWB's activities can help the Blantyre Water Board in settlement of water bills?

1. Yes
2. No

- A.5 Do you think that the involvement of consumers in the BWB's activities can help the Blantyre Water Board in curbing the illegal water connections problems?
1. Yes
 2. No
- A.6 Do you think that the involvement of consumers in the BWB's activities can help the Blantyre Water Board in reporting of thefts and burst pipes?
1. Yes
 2. No
- A.7 Do you think joint meter reading or dual meter reading card and signing can help in dealing with problems of water billing?
1. Yes
 2. No



B. PARTICIPATION OF THE CONSUMERS (Tick your preference)

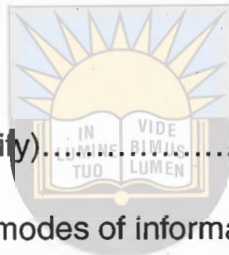
- B.1 Does the BWB get its beneficiaries/water users/consumers/stakeholders /the public to participate in its water projects and decisions affecting them?
1. Yes
 2. No
- B.2 The Blantyre Water Board provides prompt redress to the public it serves on its service delivery. Do you agree with this statement or not?
1. Totally agree
 2. Partially agree
 3. Partially disagree
 4. Totally disagree
 5. Other (please specify).....
- B.3 At what level does the BWB normally involve its public when implementing water projects?
1. At initiation and designing level
 2. At implementation level
 3. At management level
 4. At monitoring and evaluation level
 5. At all levels

B.4 Which public participation strategies or guidelines are applied by the BWB when forming the Blantyre Water Board's interventions⁹ like Water Users' Associations?¹⁰

1. Consult
2. Inform
3. Involve
4. Access to information
5. Other (please specify).....

B.5 Which group of stakeholders mostly participates in formation of the BWB's interventions?

1. The water users/beneficiaries/public
2. Private partners
3. Donors
4. Staff
5. Other (please specify).....



B.6a Which of the following modes of information transmission is mostly used by the BWB?

1. Radio
2. Newspaper
3. Television
4. Front desks
5. Other (please specify).....

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B.6b Do you think the mode mentioned in B.6a is effective?

1. Yes
2. No

B.7 If 'Yes' or 'No', please explain.

⁹ Interventions: Actions taken to improve service delivery e.g. water projects, water pump laying extensions, etc

¹⁰ Water Users' Associations: Community managed organisations or associations owned by the community with help from the water boards which guarantees much more community participation and social responsibility like ploughing back to the communities in the form of social and economic improvements i.e employment.

B.8 From your experience, what would you like the BWB to do in order to get its consumers involved in its activities?

B.9 Are you satisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's delivery of water as a customer or consumer?

1. Yes
2. No (If NO go to B.10)

B.10 Why are you not satisfied with the BWB's delivery of water?

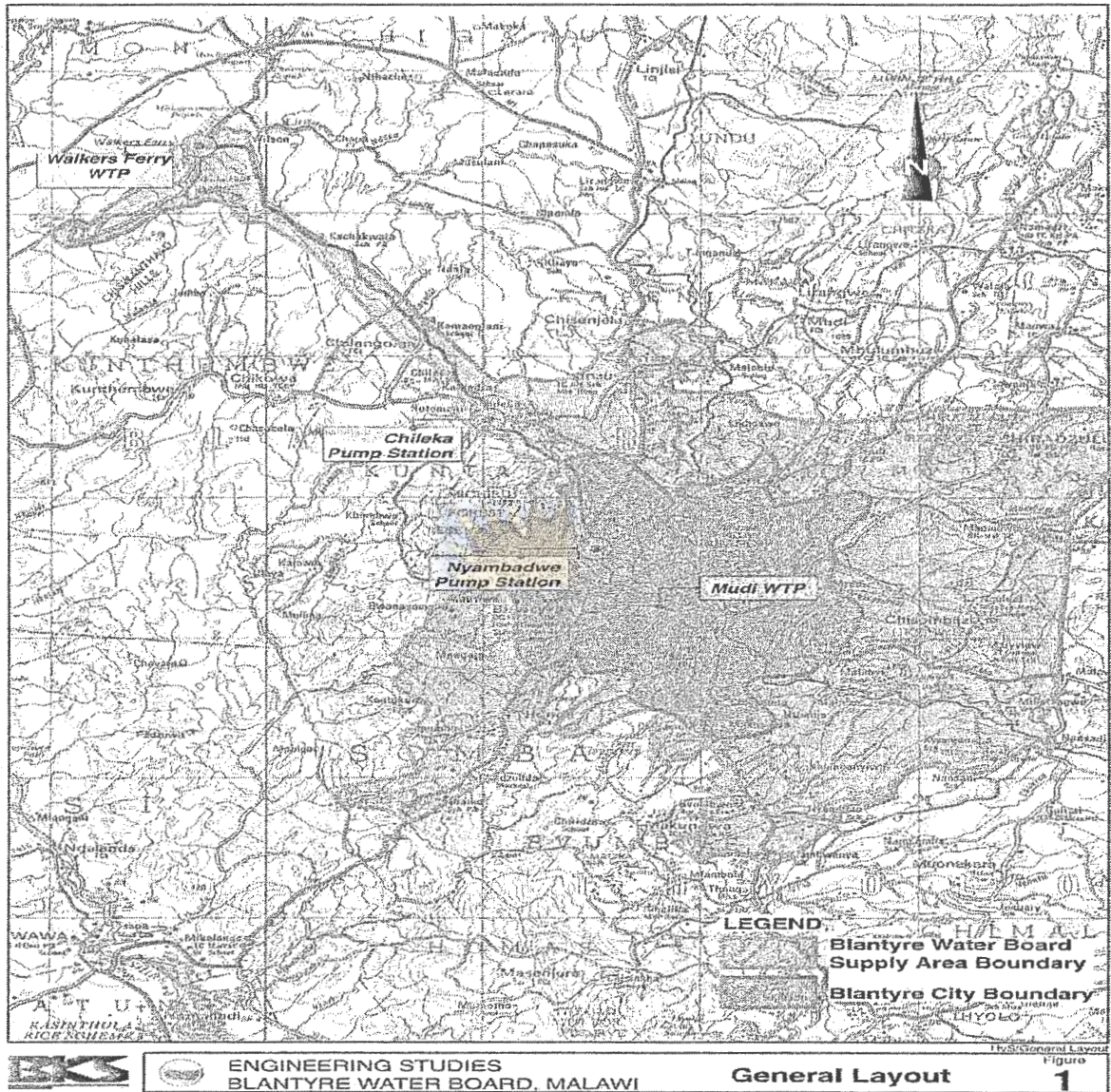
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B.11 Do you think public participation strategies which the BWB uses are effective or not?

1. Yes
2. No

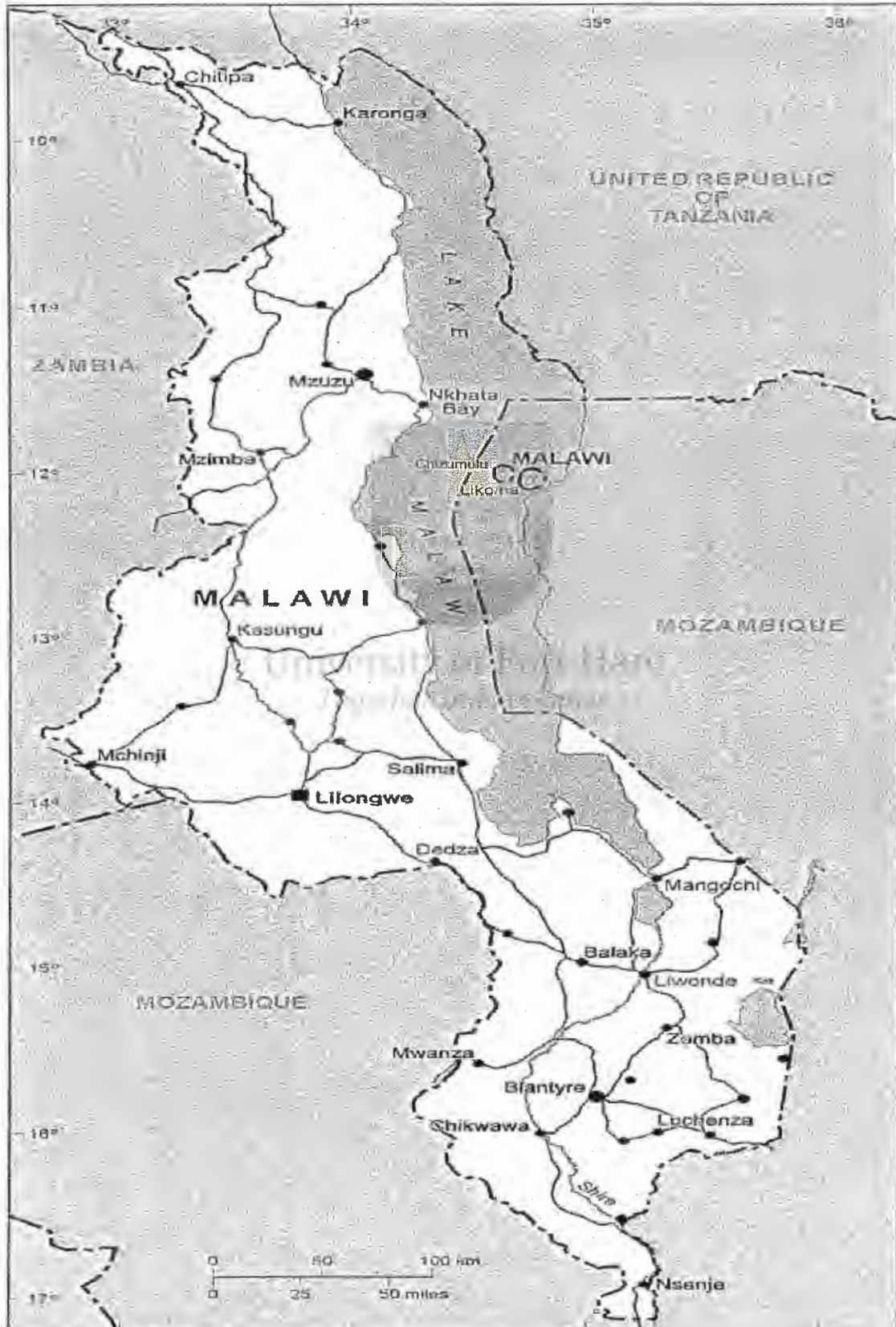
-The End-

ANNEXURE F: MAP OF THE BLANTYRE WATER BOARD SUPPLY AREA



BKS Consultants

ANNEXURE G: MAP OF MALAWI



Source: www.malawimap.com/freeworldmap

ANNEXURE H: FIGURE DEPICTING OBSERVED SCENARIO IN BLANTYRE CITY

The figure below showing Namichimba Stream, Misesa within Blantyre City – low in-come areas: girls draw water for domestic use first, then wash clothes and clean up. Notice the pipe carrying safe water can only be used to dry clothes.



Pictured by: Mtafu Zeleza Manda

ANNEXURE I: SUMMARY TABLES FOR THE QUANTITATIVELY ANALYSED DATA

QUESTIONS AND FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES GIVEN

STAFF RESPONSES						
	YES	NO	N/A			
Do you understand public participation?	73	6	0			
Is public participation important to the organization you work with?	71	2	6			
Are you involved in decision making process?	37	42	0			
Does the board involve the public in its activities?	60	19	0			
As the BWB staff, are you involved in coming up with interventions?	35	44	0			
Does the Board abide to demands of Malawi Water Policy as one of the Legal Frameworks?	50	29	0			
Does the Board abide to demands of the MDG's as an International Protocol?	47	32	0			
	Planning & designing stage	Implementation stage	Management stage	Monitoring & evaluation stage	None of those mentioned	N/A
At which stage of the BWB's decision making process do you get involved?	14	18	2	2	1	42
	Bottom-up approach	Top-bottom approach	Integrated approach	Participatory approach	None of those mentioned	
Which public participation approaches does the BWB apply in its activities?	2	43	11	18	5	
	Effective	Ineffective	Not sure			
How effective is the participatory approach chosen?	54	18	7			
	Agree	Disagree				
Do you agree that the BWB has guidelines/ strategies for public participation?	56	23				
	For sustainability of decisions	For ownership of decisions	For acceptance of decisions	For teamwork enhancement	For all mentioned	
What are the benefits of participatory approach?	8	11	7	28	25	

CONSUMERS' RESPONSES

	Yes	No	Missing			
Beneficiaries' participation in the BWB's water projects and decisions affecting them?	10	73	1			
Can joint meter reading/ dual meter reading card and signing help in dealing with water billing problems?	80	3	1			
Do you think the information transmission mode mentioned is effective?	27	55	2			
Are you satisfied with the Blantyre Water Board's delivery of water as a consumer?	37	47	0			
Do you think public participation strategies which the BWB uses are effective?	30	54	0			
	Implement ation stage	Management stage	Monitoring & evaluation stage	All levels	N/A	Missin g
At what level does the BWB normally involve its public when implementing water projects?	44	4	29	3	3	1
	Agree	Disagree				
The BWB provides prompt redress to the public it serves in its service delivery?	30	54				
	Consult	Inform	Involve	N/A		
Public participation strategies/ guidelines applied by the Board when forming the BWB's interventions?	7	72	2	3		
	Beneficiari es	Donors	Staff	N/A	Missin g	
Which group of stakeholders mostly participates in formation of the BWB's interventions?	3	12	66	2	1	
	Radio	Newspaper	Television	Other		
Which modes of information transmission are mostly used by the BWB?	54	20	1	9		
	Awarenes s campaigns	Customers to be involved at all phases	Access to information	Dual meter reading	None of those mentio ned	Missin g
What would you like the BWB to do in order to get its consumers involved in its activities?	35	20	14	11	2	2
	Wrong meter readings	No consultation or involvement	Poor service delivery	Low water pressur e	N/A	
Why are you not satisfied with the BWB's delivery of water?	5	7	12	23	37	

STAFF RESPONSES COMPARED WITH CONSUMERS' RESPONSES						
	Yes	No	Missing			
Public participation in the BWB's activities helping in settlement of water bills?						
<i>Staff</i>	77	2	0			
<i>Consumers</i>	83	1	0			
Public participation in the BWB's activities helping in reducing illegal connections?						
<i>Staff</i>	79	0	0			
<i>Consumers</i>	83	1	0			
Does the BWB involve the public in its activities?						
<i>Staff</i>	60	19	0			
<i>Consumers</i>	10	73	1			
	Political interference	Poor management and administrative style	Lack of community sensitization style	Lack of community mobilization style	Don't know	
Elements contributing to non-participation of the public in the BWB's activities?						
<i>Staff</i>	9	31	32	5	2	
<i>Consumers</i>	29	45	1	9	0	
	Agree	Disagree				
Do you agree that the BWB provides information to the public it serves?						
<i>Staff</i>	68	11				
<i>Consumers</i>	10	74				
	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all	
How frequent does the BWB provide information to the public?						
<i>Staff</i>	5	24	33	15	2	
<i>Consumers</i>	9	21	36	13	5	
	Effective	Ineffective	Not sure			
How effective is the participatory approach chosen?						
<i>Staff</i>	54	18	7			
<i>Consumers</i>	30	54	0			

The GoodReader

Language and Communications Agent

14 November 2010

To Whom it May Concern

Editorial Services for Ms. Grace Khomba

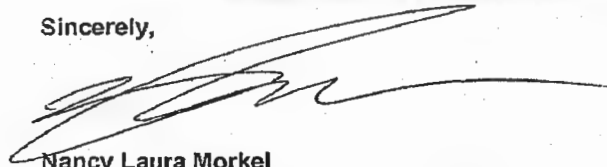
I hereby confirm that I have edited and proofread the dissertation titled:

AN ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES IN
THE PROVISION OF WATER IN MALAWI: THE CASE STUDY OF THE
BLANTYRE WATER BOARD.

A mini-dissertation completed by Ms. Girace Precious Kasamira Khomba (Student Number: 200906172) to be submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Administration in the Faculty of Management and Commerce at the University of Fort Hare.

Supervisor: Professor M.H. Kanyane

Sincerely,



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