The effects of the brittle national information policy framework on information services in Malawi

By

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the Master’s Degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS),

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Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,

University of Fort Hare.

Supervisor: Prof E.M. Ondari-Okemwa

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis submitted for the Master’s degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS) is my original work and has never been submitted to any other institution or university before. I also certify that all sources cited and quoted have been fully acknowledged.

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Hambani Adamson Gausi

Date.................................
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I wish to express my special gratitude to my supervisor, Prof E.M. Ondari-Okemwa for his tireless support in shaping this study. His insight, guidance, and constructive feedback were vital throughout the research process.

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Finally, my deep appreciation to my wife, Dean Stellar Gausi for her encouragement, understanding and support; my children, Fikani Xavier and Jessie Zoe for helping me with data entry; my sisters and brothers for their support and confidence in me.

To God be the glory.
Abstract

The aim of the study was to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. The objectives of the study were to: find out the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information access in Malawi; establish factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi; find out the extent to which the absence of an overarching policy has affected capacity building in information services in Malawi; and identify the legal and regulatory framework implications of the absence of such a policy in Malawi. The study adopted an exploratory research design. Data were collected using document analysis, observations and in-depth interviews. Eighty-two face-to-face interviews were conducted with policy makers in government, Members of Parliamentary committees on legal and media issues, information scientists, information service providers, academicians, legal experts and information users. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. An interview guide comprising closed and open ended questions was used to interview respondents. Data were analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings of this study may be used by Government in developing relevant national information policies that would enhance free access and utilisation of information. Furthermore the study is significant in identifying factors that may impede the development of a national information policy. The study revealed that Malawi has a brittle national information policy framework for the provision of information services. Malawi doesn’t have an overarching policy framework for the sector and as a result, there is no policy guidance to drive the development of sectoral policies and supporting legislation. Policy development in
Malawi is more reactive to issues than systematic and very slow. Consequently, access to and utilization of information is low; capacity building is low in terms of competencies and infrastructure and; the legal and regulatory framework for information services is weak. The study also revealed that factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy include: motivation for the development of sectoral information policies; lack of an institutional framework to guide the development of policy; lack of finances and technical capacity; lack of sustained political will; level of economic development; existence of overarching government development plans; international trends; and the diverse nature of the information sector. The general recommendation emanating from the findings of the study is that Malawi needs an overarching national information policy which would articulate and address issues regarding access to information, capacity building in terms of skills and infrastructure, and the legal and regulatory framework. Information is a cross-cutting issue requiring an all-encompassing policy. However, specific recommendations from the findings of this study are that government should expedite the development of policies and enactment of relevant pieces of legislation which are not yet in place to enhance free access and utilisation of information and ICTs; government should speed up the introduction of information literacy in the school curriculum starting from primary school level to university; government should develop a library policy to promote the development of school libraries in both primary and secondary schools, and public libraries in all towns, district assemblies and rural growth centres which should be well resourced including Internet facilities; and government should constantly review and harmonise policies and legislation in the information sector so that they are in line with current trends.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dear wife Dean Stellar Gausi and my two children Fikani Xavier and Jessie Zoe.
## List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EASSy</td>
<td>East Africa Submarine Cable System Project</td>
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<td>ECA</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Africa</td>
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<td>ESCOM</td>
<td>Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<td>ICT4D</td>
<td>ICT for Development</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
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<td>IFLA</td>
<td>International Federation of Library Associations</td>
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<td>IPR</td>
<td>Intellectual Property Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunications Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>MACRA</td>
<td>Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority</td>
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<td>MALA</td>
<td>Malawi Library Association</td>
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<td>MGDS</td>
<td>Malawi Growth and Development Strategy</td>
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<td>MTL</td>
<td>Malawi Telecommunication Limited</td>
</tr>
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<td>NCST</td>
<td>National Commission for Science and Technology</td>
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<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Partnership for African Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NICE</td>
<td>National Initiatives for Civic Education</td>
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<td>NIP</td>
<td>National information policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSO</td>
<td>National Statistics Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDNP</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Network programme</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFH</td>
<td>University of Fort Hare</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNECA</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vsat</td>
<td>Very Small Aperture Terminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIPO</td>
<td>World Intellectual Property Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Chapter 1 ........................................................................................................................................... 1
  Introduction and background to the study .................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Motivation for developing a national information policy ......................................................... 4
  1.3 International initiatives on national information policy ............................................................ 5
  1.4 National information policy development initiatives in Malawi ........................................ 6
  1.5 Malawi's information system and services .............................................................................. 8
    1.5.1 Overview of libraries, archives and documentation centers .............................................. 9
  1.6 Statement of the problem .......................................................................................................... 26
  1.7 Research aim and objectives ..................................................................................................... 27
  1.8 Research questions ..................................................................................................................... 28
  1.9 Significance of the study ............................................................................................................ 28
  1.10 Limitations ............................................................................................................................... 29
  1.11 Definition of key concepts ..................................................................................................... 31
  1.12 Organization of the thesis ........................................................................................................ 35
  1.13 Summary of the chapter .......................................................................................................... 36

Chapter 2 ............................................................................................................................................ 37
  Literature review and theoretical framework ............................................................................... 37
  2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 37
  2.2 Access to information ............................................................................................................... 39
    2.2.1 Access to information as a human right ............................................................................. 39
    2.2.2 Access to government information ................................................................................... 41
    2.2.3 Access to ICTs ................................................................................................................... 44
    2.2.4 Libraries and access to information .................................................................................... 46
    2.2.5 Generation of knowledge (Content) .................................................................................... 47
  2.3 Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy ................ 50
    2.3.1 Do countries need implicit or explicit national information policies ....................... 50
    2.3.2 National information policy or national information policies ........................................ 51
Chapter 4........................................................................................................140

Data presentation and analysis .........................................................................140

4.1 Introduction..................................................................................................140

4.2 Demographic description of the respondents................................................140

4.2.1 Respondents’ profiles.............................................................................140

4.2.2 Gender......................................................................................................142

4.2.3 Age categories.........................................................................................143

4.2.4 Levels of education ................................................................................144

4.3 Access to information services ...................................................................146

4.3.1 Access to information in Malawi.............................................................146

4.3.2 The state of publishing industry in Malawi.............................................148

4.3.3 Access to information produced by government and government-affiliated
    institutions.......................................................................................................152

4.3.4 Libraries as facilitators of access to information in Malawi....................154

4.3.4.1 Inadequate information, human and financial resources...............156

4.3.4.2 Inadequate libraries.............................................................................161

4.3.4.3 Lack of a reading culture.....................................................................165

4.3.4.4 Poor management of information resources........................................166

4.3.4.5 Lack of marketing skills among librarians...........................................167

4.3.4.6 Inadequate provision of Internet services............................................168

4.3.4.7 Legislation restricting access to information........................................170

4.3.5 Perceived challenges to access to information in Malawi.......................172

4.4 Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy
    .......................................................................................................................175

4.4.1 Motivation to develop information policy in Malawi..............................176

4.4.2 Factors preventing the development of an overarching national information
    policy in Malawi..............................................................................................178

4.4.2.1 Weak institutional framework.............................................................178

4.4.2.2 Lack of finances and technical capacity...............................................182

4.4.2.3 Lack of sustained political will.............................................................183

4.4.2.4 Level of economic development...........................................................186
4.4.2.6  Existence of overarching government development plans ..................... 188
4.4.2.7  International trends .................................................................................. 189
4.4.2.8  Diverse nature of the information sector .................................................. 192
4.5  Capacity building in information services ..................................................... 194
4.5.1  Level of capacity development in relation to libraries and information services...................................................................................................................................................................................... 195
4.5.2  Level of development of the library infrastructure in the delivery of information services .................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 197
4.5.3  Capacity to generate information and knowledge ......................................... 199
4.5.4  Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings ...... 201
4.5.5  Capacity of the citizens to access information ............................................. 203
4.4.6  Challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi ...... 204
4.6  Legal and regulatory framework for information services ............................ 208
4.6.1  The strength of the legal and regulatory framework for information services .................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 208
4.6.2  Challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services in Malawi .................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 210
4.6.3  Summary of the chapter ................................................................................ 213

Chapter 5 .................................................................................................................... 215

Discussion of findings ............................................................................................... 215
5.1  Introduction ......................................................................................................... 215
5.2  Access to information services in Malawi ....................................................... 215
5.2.1  Access to information in Malawi .................................................................. 216
5.2.2  The state of publishing industry in Malawi ................................................. 217
5.2.3  Access to information produced by government and government institutions .................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 221
5.2.4  Libraries as facilitators of access to information ......................................... 223
5.2.4.1  Inadequate provision of information, human and financial resources ...... 224
5.2.4.2  Inadequate libraries ................................................................................... 226
5.2.4.3  Lack of a reading culture .......................................................................... 228
5.2.4.4  Poor management of information resources ........................................... 229
5.2.4.5  Lack of skills among librarians to market existing library services .......... 230
5.2.4.6 Inadequate provision of Internet services .................................................. 230
5.2.4.7 Legislation that restricts access to information ............................................. 231
5.2.5 Perceived challenges to accessing information in Malawi ............................. 233
5.3. Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi ................................................................................................................ 236
5.3.1 Motivation for information policy development in Malawi ............................... 236
5.3.2 Weak institutional framework ........................................................................ 237
5.3.3 Lack of finances and technical capacity ............................................................ 239
5.3.4 Lack of sustained political will ......................................................................... 241
5.3.5 Level of economic development ....................................................................... 243
5.3.6 Existence of overarching government development plans .............................. 244
5.3.7 International trends .......................................................................................... 245
5.3.8 Diverse nature of the information sector ......................................................... 246
5.4 Information services capacity building in Malawi ............................................. 248
5.4.1 Level of competencies in relation to libraries and information services ........... 248
5.4.2 Level of development of the infrastructure in the delivery of information services ................................................................................................................................. 250
5.4.3 Capacity to generate information and knowledge ............................................ 251
5.4.4 Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings .......... 252
5.4.5 Capacity of the citizens of Malawi to access and utilize information ............. 253
5.4.6 Challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi ........ 254
5.5 Legal and regulatory framework in information services in Malawi ................. 257
5.5.1 Strength of the legal and regulatory framework for information services ....... 257
5.5.1.1 Lack of legislation on access to information .................................................. 258
5.5.1.2 Use of old legislation .................................................................................... 259
5.5.1.3 Repressive legislation .................................................................................. 261
5.5.1.4 Censorship .................................................................................................. 262
5.5.1.5 Library Law ................................................................................................. 262
5.5.1.6 Data protection and privacy ........................................................................ 263
5.5.2 Challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services in Malawi .................................................................................. 264
5.6 Summary of the chapter ...................................................................................... 265
Chapter 6

Recommendations, future areas of research and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Summary of findings

6.2.1 Access to information in Malawi

6.2.1.1 State of publishing industry in Malawi

6.2.1.3 The role of libraries in facilitating access to information in Malawi

6.2.1.4 Challenges of accessing information in Malawi

6.2.2 Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy

6.2.2.1 Motivation to develop information policy in Malawi

6.2.2.2 Weak institutional framework

6.2.2.3 Lack of finances and technical capacity

6.2.2.4 Lack of sustained political will

6.2.2.5 Level of economic development

6.2.2.6 Existence of overarching government development policies

6.2.2.7 International Trends

6.2.2.8 Diverse nature of the information sector

6.2.3 Level of competencies in relation to libraries and information services

6.2.4 Level of development of the infrastructure in the delivery of information services

6.2.5 Capacity to generate information and knowledge

6.2.6 Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings

6.2.7 Capacity of citizens to access and utilize information

6.2.8 Challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi

6.2.9 Legal and regulatory framework in information services

6.2.10 Challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services in Malawi

6.3 Conclusions from the study

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Access to information in Malawi
6.4.2 Capacity Building ................................................................. 282
6.4.3 Legal and regulatory framework ......................................... 283
6.5 Future research .................................................................. 283
6.6 Summary of the chapter ....................................................... 284
6.7 Final conclusion .................................................................. 284
References ............................................................................. 286
Appendix ................................................................................. 313
List of figures

Figure 3.1: Map of Malawi showing cities and towns.............................................................. 100
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Targeted sample size and number of those interviewed...............................120
Table 4.1: Qualifications of personnel in libraries, archives and documentation centers
...........................................................................................................................................160
Table 4.2 School and rural based libraries established by NLS by region.........................163
Table 4.3: Perceived challenges to access to information in Malawi.........................173
Table 4.4: Issues motivating information policy development in Malawi......................177
Table 4.5: Challenges of capacity development in information services in Malawi......206
Table 4.6: Challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to information services
   in Malawi..............................................................................................................................212
List of Charts

Chart 4.1: Categories of respondents ................................................................. 141
Chart 4.2: Gender distribution of the respondents ........................................ 142
Chart 4.3: Age brackets of respondents ............................................................... 143
Chart 4.4: Education and training levels of respondents .................................. 145
Chart 4.5: Levels of access to information in Malawi ..................................... 147
Chart 4.6: State of publishing industry in Malawi ........................................... 149
Chart 4.7: Access to information produced by government and government institutions .......................................................................................................................... 153
Chart 4.8: Libraries as facilitators to access to information in Malawi ............ 155
Chart 4.9: Capacity development in libraries and information services in Malawi .... 196
Chart 4.10: Level of development of information services infrastructure .......... 198
Chart 4.11: Capacity to generate information and knowledge in Malawi ........... 200
Chart 4.12: Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings ... 201
Chart 4.13: Capacity of the citizens of Malawi to access information ............... 203
Chart 4.14: Strength of the legal and regulatory framework for information services .. 209
List of appendices

Appendix 1: Response from a respondent declining an interview..........................313
Appendix 2: Covering letter seeking authority from respondents to conduct interviews
.................................................................................................................................................314
Appendix 3: Letter clarifying the topic of the study to a respondent.....................316
Appendix 4: Application for clearance to conduct research in Malawi ..................318
Appendix 5: Approval to conduct research in Malawi.............................................319
Appendix 6: The interview guide..................................................................................320
Appendix 7: Cover letter from the Department of Library and Information Science, UFH
..................................................................................................................................................328
Appendix 8: Observation guide......................................................................................329
1.1 Introduction

This study is on the national information policy and explores the effects of the brittle national information policy framework on information services in Malawi. Countries world over have realised the critical role information plays in socio-economic development. As a result of this realization, many countries have formulated national information policies to develop and harmonise information services to make them more effective and accessible (Montviloff, 1990).

However, the development of a national information policy is not on Malawi Government’s agenda. The present study was prompted by the growing concern over the underdeveloped national information system and information services in Malawi which are not responsive to information needs of the citizenry (National Research Council of Malawi (NRCM), 2005). The researcher has reasons to think that the absence of an overarching national information policy affects information services in Malawi. This situation persuaded the researcher to conduct a study on the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi.

The concept of a national information policy has generated its own debate to the extent that there is no precise agreement on its definition. Brown (1997) concedes that the definition of an information policy or its historical origins have not been agreed upon.
Pajaro and Betancourt (2007:23) define a national information policy (NIP) as ‘a planned courses of action, defined by public decision-makers as state policy, with contributions by all interested parties, especially civil society and the private sector, to ensure public- and private-domain information access and use in various media and formats by the citizenry under equal conditions’. Also as “State policy establishing mechanisms and generating actions to reduce existing gaps in information access and usage, for both public-domain and private information, by the entire population, with equity, sustainable development, safety and social justice, to foster knowledge”. Oppenheim (1994) as quoted in Orna (2008:550) defines a national information policy as ‘a series of decisions taken by a national government, which are designed to encourage a better information infrastructure.’

However, Soler (2007:16) argues that Montviloff (1990) provides one of the definitions most widely accepted by information experts. Montviloff (1990:7) defines a policy as ‘a series of principles and strategies orienting a course of action to attain a given goal…applied to the field of information; policies provide orientation to design a strategy and programs to develop and use information resources, services and systems’.

The term Information policy was first used, in reference to Government, for propaganda in the First and Second World Wars by the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) governments. The two governments were disseminating information that they wanted people to receive and not what people wanted to know. The new thinking of a national information policy began towards the end of the 1960s. Most of the issues addressed in national information policy nowadays emerged by 1970s (Orna 2008:549).
These included public access to government information; restriction to personal data, freedom of information; gathering of data, particularly statistics which could be used in the formulation of policies; and how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) could be used to keep, process and disseminate information (Orna, 2008:549). The USA government released a first formal statement on national information policy in 1971. The statement is often referred to as the Rockefeller Report and was released following an order from Richard Nixon who was at that time the president of the United States of America (USA). Since then, it has been accorded more attention throughout the world by governments, library and information scientists and ICT industries with different approaches. However, Moore (1998) and Oppenheim as cited in Orna (2008:550) identified two broad models of developing a national information policy. The first model is called the *Laissez faire*, in which the market becomes responsible for formulating information policy. Regulations are removed to open up the market to competition. Attention is given to market forces and well-organized operations. Industries develop policies to prevent their businesses from falling and to consolidate their competitiveness in the global economy. The second policy model is called *dirigiste*, which places more emphasis on the role of the state. The state is required to plan and more so, finance the building of the information infrastructure. The state is responsible for supporting the growth of the private sector by putting up policies favoring investment, procurement, funding of research and development, and measures that may restrict entry of foreign competitors in order to protect national industries. The state is essentially responsible for putting up and implementing enabling policies and the right legal and regulatory environment. This is a basis for a flourishing information sector and
consequently the efficient functioning of organisations and the information society (UNESCO, 2009a:47).

1.2 Motivation for developing a national information policy

The development of a national information policy is often driven by social, economic and the historical factors of a country. However, there is also greater influence from external factors at global level. Browne (1997:261) observes that earlier national information policies were developed based on the concern of the movement and use of information. There was a growing concern that about 80% of the world’s information and knowledge, particularly in science and technology was being generated by a small number of countries which were industrially advanced. The majority of the countries which were and some are still developing had to obtain this information from industrially advanced nations at a very high cost (Mangla, 2003:94-95). National information policies had to be put in place to address the situation.

In recent times the development has been prompted by the rapid growth of technology and the information superhighway, also referred to as the global information infrastructure. Governments are now setting up regulatory and national technical infrastructures to facilitate the delivery of information to the citizenry (Browne, 1997). The establishment of a global information infrastructure no longer accords countries the liberty to have independent national information systems because they now have to be part of the global network. Countries are therefore, required to upgrade their own information systems and policies so that they can be incorporated into the global network and also to be able to deal with any adverse effects that might result from the development. A national information policy is therefore, the means to addressing these
requirements and challenges (Whalen, 1994:1). A survey carried out by IFLA in 1996/97 revealed that the development of a national information policy is indeed an issue in many countries in the world. Most of the countries which participated in the survey were from Asia, Australia, Europe South America and Africa indicated that they had a national information policy or a National IT strategy and others had both (Niegaard, 1999:online). However, Malawi does not have an overarching national information policy or an IT strategy though some actions have been initiated on the regulatory and technical infrastructure to enhance information delivery to the citizenry. Malawi established the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority in 1998 to regulate the communication sector, upgraded telecommunication services from analogue to digital, liberalized the telecommunications sector, introduced mobile phone services and the fibre optic cable links which led to some improvements in telecommunication service delivery (Ministry of Information and Civic Education (MoEST), 2006:3).

1.3 International initiatives on national information policy

A number of international organizations have been advocating and financing the development of national information policies globally. For instance, the IDRC, UNESCO and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) have for many years been supporting initiatives towards the development of national information policies in Africa. The organisations have been promoting the management and dissemination of information on developmental issues and advocating for the formulation of national information policies. The Pan African Documentation and Information System (PADIS) was therefore established in 1980 under the auspices of ECA to assist its member states with the formulation of information plans and policies. The formulation process of
national information policies during that time was targeted at libraries as they were traditionally the main facilities managing information resources (ECA, 1999:online). These initiatives managed to kick start debate on the development of a national information policy in Malawi though it was not sustained.

The advent of the information technology revolution and its potential to handle and manipulate information and the global move towards building an information society brought a shift on governments’ focus worldwide including Malawi on the national information policy (Orna, 2008:552; Smith, 2002:183; Stone, 1996:online). High level Government discussions ensued on information policies relating to IT and ICT infrastructure which took precedence over content. A trend which Smith cautions against when he observes:

“...Technology factors have succeeded in crowding out knowledge content in such debate... It is content however, which has historically been the resource which has made the real difference to understanding, learning and creation of new knowledge...creativity will be impeded if IT skewed thinking marginalizes the knowledge itself to the point that it is allowed to become the overlooked dimension...the knowledge based future is not characterized only by massive investment in IT infrastructure but also on respect for and appreciation of knowledge content as a key driver” (Smith, 2002:183).

Responding to international trends, national governments including Malawi started putting up initiatives to formulate national information policies.

1.4 **National information policy development initiatives in Malawi**

Malawi’s initiatives to develop a national information policy started in the late 1980s through a UNESCO programme called National Information Systems (NATIS). A draft policy was developed to guide the development of the national information system and services for Malawi with the support of UNESCO and PADIS. However, the policy was
never adopted by government, let alone endorsed by PADIS because it was considered narrow in scope and library based (NRCM, 2002). A predicament noted by Kisiedu (1989) as quoted by ECA (1999) on the early national information policy proposals put up by many African countries. Kisiedu observes:

“The proposed policies were characterized by lack of comprehensiveness in their contents and coverage despite having broader conceptualization, they were largely oriented towards library and documentation activities, and the formulation process was directed by the library and documentation community” (ECA, 1999: online).

The IT revolution, coupled with the advent of democratic rule in Malawi in 1994, reinforced government's commitment on the role of information and use of ICTs in Malawi's socio-economic development (Ministry of Information and Civic Education, 2006:3). The Government of Malawi embarked on a number of ICT sector specific policy initiatives. A Communication Policy was developed in 1998 which set the country's agenda for the development of the communications sector, covering broadcasting (both radio and television), telecommunications and postal services. Furthermore, the Malawi Government put in place legislation, the Communications Act No.1 of 1998, which provided for the establishment of a regulatory authority to harmonize operations in the communication sector. To this effect Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) was established and started its operations in 2000. Government developed a Rural Telecommunications Policy in 2002 as an integral part of the National Communications Policy of 1998 to provide ICT access to rural areas where 85% of the population live and to other underserved areas. The policy focus is on government incentives in the sector, standards of rural telecommunication services, the cost of rural telecommunication services, interconnection between networks, access to radio frequency spectrum, value added
services and regulation. Government also instituted a number of reforms in the telecommunication sector that led to the privatisation of Malawi Telecommunication Limited which was a public entity and a sole telecommunication service provider. This was aimed at introducing competition which would in turn encourage investment and improvement of the services offered to the public.

Malawi embarked on the process of formulating an ICT policy with technical and financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ECA. A draft policy was developed in 2006 whose aim was to improve the operations of all economic sectors through utilization of ICTs and to develop capacity to produce ICT products and ICT knowledge transfer (MoEST, 2006:6). However, the policy has not been adopted by government up to now. Could this be another forgotten policy initiative? The long delay in adopting the ICT policy could be a demonstration of lack of sustained commitment the Malawi Government has on information issues. Government has been quite slow in developing policies in the information sector. Arnolds (2002:2) argues that government passes legislation or formulates a public policy on issues and problems it values. This could be a reflection of the priority the Government of Malawi accords to information policies. Yet information is a critical resource for the socio-economic development of a country.

1.5 Malawi’s information system and services

According to Poliniere (1975:2) a national information system refers to a collection of all inter-related institutions as well as professionals dealing with information in a country. Malawi’s information system therefore, embraces libraries, documentation and information centers; ICT industries; mass media; research and development
establishments and all other institutions and professionals involved in the generation, collection, storage and dissemination of information. Their roles complement each other and relate as a unit. A well-coordinated information system entails better information services in a country (Mangla, 2003:96).

According to Montviloff (1990:6) information services is ‘the provision of information and data through systems and networks of different types in the public and private sectors’. Montviloff further explains that these systems and networks could be ‘data banks, data bases, library systems, library services, documentation centres and services; information analysis, consolidation and repackaging centres and services; archives, and statistical services’. Malawi’s information services in this study however, are limited to services rendered by libraries, archives and documentation centers in supporting social reading, research, teaching, learning, plans and strategies of the parent organisation; archival services; preservation of cultural heritage and ICT services.

1.5.1 Overview of libraries, archives and documentation centers

The library system in Malawi comprises: the Malawi National Library Service which provides information services to Malawian citizenry in urban and rural areas; Academic libraries which serve academicians, students and other stakeholders; the National Archives of Malawi which provides information services to government departments, private organisation, researchers and the general public; the Museums of Malawi offer services to the general public, researchers and students; Special libraries which serve the information needs of the parent organisations; School libraries which provide information services to teachers and pupils including surrounding communities; the National Documentation Centre (NDC) which caters for researchers, scientists and the
public; the Malawi Library Consortium (MALICO) which caters for all paid-up member libraries on accessing international e-resources; and the Malawi Library Association (MALA) which is responsible for the development of the library profession in the country.

1.5.1.1 The National Library Service (NLS)

The National Library Service was established by an Act of Parliament Number 31 of 1967 with a mandate to promote, establish, equip, manage, maintain and develop libraries in Malawi. The NLS started its operations in 1968. It is a fully government sub-vented statutory corporation in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The NLS is headed by a National Librarian who reports to the Malawi National Library Service Board. The headquarters of the NLS are in Lilongwe with regional branches in Mzuzu and Blantyre. It has 13 branch libraries situated in 11 districts which include Karonga, Likoma, Nkhotakota, Nkhotakota. Lilongwe has three branches in Area 36, Fall Estate, and at Headquarters. Other branches are located in Mulanje, Thyolo (at Luchenza), Monkey Bay and Zomba. NLS has a staff establishment of 101 with only four professional librarians two have a Bachelor’s Degree and two have Master’s degrees in Library and Information Science). The NLS supports education, social reading and research by providing access to national and international information resources. Specific functions of the NLS include:

- Promoting and coordinating the establishment of resource centres in public institutions and community libraries. These community libraries serve as learning centres through promotion of literacy, information awareness and support for lifelong learning. They also act as centres for the dissemination of technical information in all fields and recreational reading. Services in these community
libraries are rendered in most cases through the use of volunteers that are supported by NLS. It also supports the establishment of school libraries and training of teacher librarians.

- Promoting the production of easy-to-read and educational pamphlets for children and adult learners.

- Providing basic library services which include lending, reference and inter-library loans. It also provides access to e-resources through Internet services available at its headquarters branch library and regional branch libraries in Mzuzu and Blantyre. It has a general collection and special collections on Malawian publications referred to as Malawiana (A term commonly used by libraries in Malawi to mean documents produced or published in Malawi by Malawians or any document on Malawi), World Bank and United Nations publications available on closed-access system only. In addition it houses the World Bank Development Information Center which started its operations in 2007 and is open to the general public. The center mainly stocks World Bank information from different parts of the world covering different disciplines relating to socio-economic development.

- Establishing and maintaining links with international organisations like Book Aid International and Canadian Organisation for Development through Education (CODE) in order to enhance its information services. The NLS has received a lot of support from these cooperating partners in terms of funding for training of teacher librarians and information resources that are distributed to other libraries
in Malawi on request. These information resources have also been used to support existing school libraries and in establishing new ones.

An interview with one senior member of staff revealed that despite registering some milestones, the NLS faces a number of challenges which affect its operations towards the achievement of its objectives. The challenges include inadequate funding from government to roll out information services to more areas and districts; inadequate infrastructure in terms of ICTs and space for users. Most of the buildings housing libraries particularly in cities lack space to meet the demand for information services. This puts pressure on the existing structures leading to congestion and discomfort to readers. In addition, lack of implementation of human resources development programmes due to financial constraints has led to utilization of lowly qualified staff who are not well motivated. The National Library Service has managed to achieve some of the objectives considering the many challenges the institution is encountering. However, it has also not done much in terms of rolling out information services to the remaining districts including schools in Malawi, considering that it has been operational since 1968. Currently, very few schools and communities have access to library services. NLS has managed to establish branch libraries in less than half of the 28 districts in Malawi. It has also not done much on the provision of Internet service to users. In most of the libraries, there are no Internet facilities apart from the library at the headquarters and the regional branch libraries in Blantyre and Mzuzu. Furthermore, access to the Internet is at a fee, probably because of the financial constraints the NLS experiences and the high costs of maintaining Internet services in Malawi.
1.5.1.2 Academic libraries

Academic libraries are found in universities and other institutions of higher learning in Malawi. There are three public universities in Malawi which include University of Malawi, Mzuzu University and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources which was established in 2011. There are a number of private universities in Malawi which include Catholic University, Malawi Adventist University, University of Livingstonia, Exploits University, and Share World University. There is also the Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) which offers Master’s and PhD programmes in conjunction with Universities in the UK and the USA, like the University of Boston and the University of Derby. According to interviews with some college librarians from the University of Malawi, a librarian from MIM and Mzuzu University Library, academic libraries in Malawi support teaching, learning, and research for students, academicians and the community at large. Academic libraries also offer Internet services to students at a fee particularly in public universities. However, academic libraries in Malawi are inadequately provided for in terms of finances which have affected collection development, training and technical services (Chaputula, 2010). Academic libraries are also required to respond to additional tasks of instilling the reading culture, information searching and ICT skills in undergraduate students. In Malawi, undergraduate students normally come from backgrounds of no ICTs and underdeveloped school libraries as a result they do not have good information searching skills. However, interviews with a College Librarian at Bunda College and a librarian at College of Medicine indicated that there is very little time allocated for information literacy. Normally academic libraries rely on orientation
programmes for the first year students. Orientation programmes usually take one week and libraries are often given only one or two slots of two hours long.

1.5.1.3 The National Archives of Malawi

The National Archives of Malawi is a government department in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture. Its headquarters are in Zomba with regional offices in Lilongwe and Mzuzu. It has a staff establishment of 69 with 48 positions meant for professional staff. However, there are only 11 qualified librarians and archivists in place and nine clerical staff members. It was established in Zomba in 1947 as a regional branch of the Central African Archives which later in 1953 became the National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The Zomba regional branch was in January of 1964 declared the National Archives of Malawi when the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland got dissolved in 1963 (National Archives of Malawi 2007).

The National Archives of Malawi is responsible for keeping and preserving public records and archives in Malawi. It derives its mandate from the National Archives Act (Chap. 28:01) and the Printed Publications Act (Chap. 19:01) of the Laws of Malawi. The National Archives Act and the Printed Publications Act empower the National Archives of Malawi to preserve and provide access to Malawi’s documentary heritage which comprise public records, archives and printed works that document the lives of Malawians, activities of government and national institutions (National Archives of Malawi, 2007).

The specific functions of the National Archives of Malawi are to: -
• ‘Regulate the creation, classification, maintenance, and disposal of public records regardless of the media
• Provide economic storage accommodation for semi-current government records
• Preserve archival materials for reference, research, posterity and socio-economic development
• Conserve archival materials with a view to enhancing their lifespan
• Provide authorized access to records, public archives, historical manuscripts, printed and published works deposited with the National Archives
• Collect historical manuscripts and conduct oral history research programmes to complement the official records and archives of Malawi
• Provide a nation-wide advisory service in records and archives management
• Maintain a legal deposit library for the preservation of printed and published works on Malawi
• Register newspapers published in Malawi as provided for under the Printed Publications Act

However, the National Archives of Malawi faces a number of challenges that affect its operations. For instance, it is not housed in a building meant for archives as a result of which it experiences problems with preservation and conservation. In addition, it operates with inadequate personnel and financial resources; lack a proper human resources development programme for staff to provide direction in records and archives management in Malawi. Furthermore, the National Archives of Malawi Act is too
outdated to accommodate current trends and compliance of publishers to the requirements of the Printed Publications Act (National Archives of Malawi, 2007). The National Archives of Malawi has managed to achieve some of its objectives despite facing many challenges. However, it needs to improve the situation of record keeping in most government institutions. It has not been able to carry out comprehensive nationwide advisory services in records and archives management. Currently, records management systems in most government institutions are not functioning well to facilitate easy access to records and archives. Compliance of publishers to the legal deposit requirements is another area that the National Archives of Malawi needs to work on. One employee observed that compliance is at 30-40%. He further observed that there are a lot of publications which are being sold in bookshops and some found in libraries which have not been deposited with the National Archives of Malawi. This has effects on the legal deposit library which the National Archives of Malawi maintains.

1.5.1.4 The Museums of Malawi

The Museums of Malawi fall under the Department of Museums of Malawi in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture. The headquarters are at Top Mandala in Blantyre. Malawi has four public museums located in four different districts. The four public museums include:

- The Museums of Malawi, also known as the Chichiri Museum situated at the civic centre in Blantyre.
- The Mtengatenga Museum situated at Namaka in Chiradzulu district
- The Lake Malawi Museum in Mangochi district
- The Mzuzu Regional Museum in the City of Mzuzu
The Museums of Malawi are administered by a statutory authority established under the Museums Act of 1969. The mandate of the Museums of Malawi is to study and preserve cultural heritage and to disseminate knowledge to the public through exhibits and publications. The exhibits are divided into two galleries, the natural history gallery and ethno/history and archaeology gallery. The natural history gallery consists of displays on the Fauna of Malawi. Carefully, selected animal, bird and reptile specimens are displayed to relate some aspects of animal life in the natural environment. These displays help visitors, particularly school children to appreciate wildlife in Malawi.

Ethno/history and archaeology gallery consists of archaeological displays, ethnographical displays, art and history displays. Archaeological displays illustrate Stone Age and Iron Age implements recovered from various archaeological sites in Malawi. Ethnographical displays include traditional artefacts used as domestic appliances, hunting weapons and musical instruments for ceremonial or recreational purposes (Malawi Government, 2008: online). Apart from displays, the museum also houses a small library with a collection on natural history of Malawi and other countries associated with the Malawian history. The collection is available for reference only. An interview with a member of staff of the Department of Museums of Malawi revealed that there are plans to open a museum in Lilongwe. However, the Museums of Malawi are facing a number of challenges which are affecting their operations. The challenges mentioned included inadequate funding from government for operations, underdeveloped Internet services with slow speed, and unreliable transport for field research and outreach programmes.
1.5.1.5 Special libraries

In Malawi special libraries are found in government ministries and departments, private organisations, research stations, statutory corporations and other organizations with specialized information needs. Special libraries are established to support the mission of their sponsoring organization. They collect, monitor, organize, analyse, evaluate, package and disseminate information for their parent or client organizations. Some examples of special libraries in Malawi include Chitedze Research Station Library which specializes in agricultural information, UNESCO library which specializes in information and publications produced by UNESCO, Tea Research Foundation Library which specializes in tea farming information, Ministry of Health Library which deals with health information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Library which specializes in information on international cooperation. Other special libraries include Malawi Human Rights Commission library specialized in human rights information, Malawi Investment Promotion Agency specialized in information related to trade and investment, Malawi Bureau of Standards library specialised in information on standards and specifications and the National Assembly Library specialised in legal information and parliamentary proceedings. However, special libraries in Malawi are facing a number of challenges which affect the achievement of their objectives. Interviews with librarians from selected special libraries at Malawi Human Rights Commission, Malawi Investment Promotion Agency, Ministry of Health, National Assembly and UNESCO revealed that special libraries that exist in Malawi are not accorded the due attention they deserve. These special libraries are often improperly housed; run by lowly trained staff with no have
human resource development plans; lack proper career structures; have inadequate ICT infrastructure; and lack budget lines to offer effective services.

1.5.1.6 School libraries

School libraries are found in primary and secondary schools, primary school teacher training colleges and vocational training institutions in Malawi. The libraries are meant to support and improve teaching and learning processes by providing teachers and students with supporting information materials. School libraries therefore contribute to the achievement of national educational aims and objectives. In addition school libraries help to:

- Promote a reading culture among students and surrounding communities
- Enhance information literacy among students, teachers and communities around the school through improved knowledge on available information resources and services, the use of different sources and formats of quality, relevant and up-to-date information.

School libraries in Malawi are a responsibility of respective schools. The absence of a budget line for school libraries in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and national policy guidelines on the development of school libraries and information resource centres, have resulted in poor or no libraries in most of the schools in Malawi particularly in government schools (NRCM, 2005). However, the NLS as indicated earlier (Cf 1.4.1.1) provides support to existing school libraries and in establishing new ones in schools that have shown interest and commitment. The support is in form of training of teachers in managing the libraries and also provides information resources which come from the Book Aid International, Canadian Organisation for Development
through Education (CODE) and other well-wishers. The challenge though with using books donated by international organisations is that such books may not be relevant to Malawian schools and environment.

1.5.1.7 The National Documentation Centre (NDC)

The National Documentation Centre was established in 1990 in the then Department of Research and Environmental Affairs in the Office of the President and Cabinet with financial and technical support from UNESCO. The aim of the NDC was to establish and coordinate a national information system for Malawi consisting of information holding centres. The specific objectives of the NDC were to:

- act as a national focal point for the country's national information system
- maintain a record of available information resources in the country and
- promote and co-ordinate documentation, library and bibliographic control services

The NDC was expected to support the network through the development of national and subject specific databases and the production of directories from the databases. In addition, the NDC was expected to concentrate on library policy issues and resource sharing (UNDP, 1988). An interview with a member of staff from the Directorate of Documentation and Information Services of the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) which took over the functions of the NDC revealed that over the years the NDC established four stand-alone databases using CDS/ISIS software distributed for free by UNESCO. The databases were on:

- research projects done in Malawi,
• research publications emanating in Malawi
• science and technology institutions in Malawi
• librarians, documentalists and archivists in Malawi

Directories were produced from the databases and were circulated to institutions in Malawi. The directories last came out in 2005. However, databases on science and technology institutions and on librarians, documentalists and archivists have been updated and directories are expected to be published before the end of 2012. Databases on research projects and publications produced in Malawi have not been populated since then. This was attributed to challenges the NDC was facing which included inadequate funding coupled with the lack of a comprehensive human resources development program, inadequate ICT facilities, stakeholders’ limited awareness and recognition of the NDC’s role, and weak institutional linkages which affected the effectiveness of the NDC. In addition, institutional instability affected the operations of the NDC. With constant government restructuring exercises the NDC moved from one parent institution to the other. For instance, in 1996 it moved from the Department of Research and Environmental Affairs to the Ministry of Research and Environmental Affairs. In 2002 the Ministry got dissolved and the NDC moved to National Research Council of Malawi (NRCM). In 2010 the NRCM was integrated into the NCST, a fully government sub-vented statutory corporation in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The integration of NRCM into NCST followed the implementation of the Science and Technology Act of 2003. The functions of the NDC were therefore integrated into a directorate of Documentation and Information Services of the NCST. The directorate has three divisions the Documentation Services Division,
ICT Services Division and the Information, Education and Communication Division. The Documentation Services Division assumed the functions of the NDC. The current setup means the demise of the NDC as an entity. The researcher feels that the NDC did not do much in terms of achieving its objectives. For instance, it did not manage to establish a national information system. One of the problems was the narrow interpretation of a national information system to mean libraries, documentation and archives only as a result the NDC only concentrated its efforts on library issues leaving out the other components (Cf 1.4). In addition, the NDC was not able to promote and coordinate documentation, library and bibliographic control services because it lacked the legal mandate and as a result there was less recognition of its role and consequently weak institutional linkages.

1.5.1.8 Malawi Library Consortium

The Malawi Library Consortium (MALICO) was established in 2003 as a membership based organisation with the aim of enhancing the capacity of libraries and other information resource centres to access electronic information resources. Any library or information resource centre is free to join the consortium.

The specific objectives of MALICO are to:

- Encourage national, regional and international cooperation among information stakeholders
- Influence information policy at national level
- Work for adequate ICT infrastructure for members, especially sufficient bandwidth
- Assist in the development of appropriate ICT skills at all levels
• Facilitate access to journal articles in international databases
• Organize and digitize Malawian content
• Provide information consultancy (MALICO, 2007: online)

Currently there are 18 paid up member libraries. These include; Lilongwe University for Agriculture and Natural Resources (then called Bunda College), Chancellor College, The Malawi Polytechnic, College of Medicine, Domasi College of Education, Ekwendeni School of Nursing, Kamuzu College of Nursing, Malawi Bureau of Standards, Malawi College of Health Sciences, Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre, Malawi Institute of Management, Malawi National Library Service, Mzuzu University, National AIDS Commission, National Archives of Malawi, National Commission for Science and Technology (then called National Research Council of Malawi) and Reserve Bank of Malawi (Malawi Library Consortium, 2010).

Over the years MALICO has been working towards promoting ICT infrastructure for libraries in Malawi, particularly improved Internet bandwidth. In 2005 MALICO acquired 4 VSATs through Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). The VSATs were stationed at three constituent colleges of the University of Malawi (Chancellor College, Bunda College and College of Medicine) and Mzuzu University campuses. MALICO members have also been able to access e-resources at a subsidised rate through the INASP-PERI programme. For instance in 2007 MALICO managed to raise $25,000 from its members for the subscription of full text online international journals (MALICO, 2007: online). However, the list of journal titles varies according to what members have contributed to MALICO for the journals subscription. MALICO has also organized a number of ICT training workshops to improve ICT skills for its members to access e-
resources. An interview with one of the board members of MALICO revealed that there have been some challenges that have affected MALICO’s operations. The satellite connections have been expensive to maintain. The bandwidth and speed of the Internet associated with the VSAT technology posed some challenges to Internet users in terms of downloading large documents. Paying for the e-journals subscriptions has not been easy for MALICO because of low contributions from members.

1.5.1.9 Malawi Library Association (MALA)

Malawi library Association is a membership based professional association for personnel working in library, documentation, archives and information resource centres. The main aim of the association is to advance librarianship and information services in Malawi through education and training. It has been operational since 1976 and is responsible for training in library and information science at non-graduate certificate level (Uta, 2005:52). An interview with the General Secretary for MALA, revealed that the training covers cataloguing and classification, introduction to ICTs, public relations, research methods, reference services, communication skills, library management skills, and collection development. Government and other employers been recognizing the role of the association in library education and training albeit at a slow base. MALA graduates have been employed as library assistants in some government and private libraries. In addition, employers who have advertised for posts of library assistants have put MALA certificate as a requirement. Furthermore MALA graduates have also been admitted for undergraduate diploma courses at Mzuzu University in Malawi and in other universities outside Malawi, for instance at University of Botswana (Uta, 2005).
However, libraries and information services in Malawi are the least developed in the SADC region (NRCM, 2005). Libraries in Malawi face a number of challenges that derail their operations as they strive for efficient and effective dissemination of information and knowledge to Malawians. The challenges include; lack of enough qualified personnel, poor physical infrastructures, lack of coordination and collaboration, lack of problem-tailored services, inadequate ICTs, poor utilization of locally generated information and inadequate funding (NRCM, 2005). Literature indicates that there are about 20 professional librarians in Malawi against a population of 13 million and only 20% of them have proficiency in ICT (Salanje, 2007:75). It is estimated that about 76% of the civil service, 88% of the private sector, and 90% of the statutory corporations operate in an environment without organized library, documentation and information services (NRCM, 2005). Only 28% of institutions in Malawi have physical structures and facilities designated for library, documentation, and information services. Furthermore, the available structures lack requisite equipment and furniture. It is estimated that only 21% of the country's information holding centres use internationally recognized procedures for organizing and storing information resources resulting in poor retrieval systems. A small proportion of institutions are using ICT to manage their information. Internet facilities are inadequate with slow connectivity and at times erratic (NRCM, 2005). In addition, Malawi does not have a National Library which, among others, is responsible for collecting, recording, organizing, preserving and making available the nation’s total output of recorded information. These functions have instead been fragmented among different institutions without proper coordination and implementation. The statistics given above describe how underdeveloped libraries and information services are in
Malawi particularly in government and private institutions. They further demonstrate the lack of government’s recognition and appreciation of the role of libraries in the socio-economic development of the country. This is greatly hindering the growth of libraries and information services in Malawi. The state of libraries and information services in Malawi is likely widening the information gap and digital divide and isolating Malawi further from the global economy. Libraries have for centuries been effective leaders of content which is a critical component of any knowledge based society (Smith, 2002:118). A knowledge based society is a society in which knowledge has become the most important production factor, there is a culture of knowledge production underpinned by a high level of education and the focus is not only on the use of modern ICTs but also on content, meaning and knowledge (Lor and Britz, 2007:389).

Another major infrastructural set back in the sector is the unreliable power supply which poses serious consequences on the development of information services in Malawi. The current power generation capacity is far less than the demand as a result of which there are frequent intermittent power supplies. Furthermore, only 7% of the country’s population has access to electricity. Most of the rural areas where the majority of the population lives are not electrified (World Bank, 2012a:online). This has serious implications on the delivery of information services in the country.

1.6 Statement of the problem

Despite countries registering interest in national information policy matters a couple of decades ago, there is still need of a clear understanding of the concept of national information policy. Minimal attention has been given to the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services. Consequently,
governments’ responses have been irregular, reactive to issues, and very slow to match the pace at international level. Up to date, Malawi does not have an overarching national information policy. It is believed that information services in Malawi are the least developed in the SADC region (NRCM, 2005). Consequently, the information services in Malawi are not responsive to needs of society. This is in spite of some government policy initiatives in the ICT sector. People are thus being denied free access to information and this affects Malawi's transition from an agrarian society to an information society and consequently a knowledge society. Malawi therefore risks exclusion from the global economy. Many countries in the world have paid great attention to coordination of information services so that they can respond to the information needs of all citizens (Montviloff, 1990). They have ended up developing national information policies to ensure harmonious implementation and operation of information systems and services. It is against this background that the present study used an exploratory research design to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. The researcher is not aware of any previous studies conducted in Malawi on the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services. The study will therefore provide some new and useful insights into the area of national information policy.

1.7 Research aim and objectives

The aim of the study was to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:
• To find out the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on access to information services in Malawi
• To establish factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi
• To find out the extent to which the absence of an overarching policy has affected capacity building in information services in Malawi
• To identify the legal and regulatory framework implications of the absence of an overarching information policy in Malawi

1.8 Research questions

This research will attempt to address the following questions:

• What are the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on access to information service in Malawi?

• What are the impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi?

• How has the absence of an overarching national information policy affected the development of human resources and information infrastructure in Malawi?

• What are the implications of the absence of an overarching national information policy on the legal and regulatory framework relating to information services in Malawi?

1.9 Significance of the study

The researcher has no knowledge of any previous studies conducted in Malawi on the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information
services. Malawi does not have an overarching national information policy despite being a world phenomenon. The researcher was then motivated to carry out this study to find out factors impeding the development of a national information policy and the effects of the absence of such a policy on information services in Malawi. The findings of this study would be of interest to policy makers, information managers, users and information service providers since it will reveal issues relevant to the information sector in terms of factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy and effects of the absence of such a policy on information services which are intrinsic to Malawi. Since the study is relatively of recent focus on Malawi, it would trigger more debate and research in the area of national information policy. This research would also be of significance to the academia because it will contribute to the field of information policy.

1.10 Limitations

Information obtained through this study may not be generalized. This was an exploratory study whose aim was to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through interviews and is largely based on people perceptions and experiences which could be biased. The sampling procedure used to select research participants was a purposive sampling technique and may not have been fully representative of the study population.

The researcher also experienced problems in scheduling interviews particularly with policy makers and legal experts. The researcher made bookings in writing through the office of the Director General of the National Commission for Science and Technology
where he works after failing to secure an appointment for an interview using the official letter from the University. The letters were sent in advance requesting respondents to set convenient dates and times when the researcher could have the interview with them. The researcher received no feedback from all the letters that were sent out and had to make follow-ups by phone to confirm receipt of the letters and agree on the time of the interview. However, this was most of the time done through secretaries of research participants and proved to be time-consuming. In some instances the researcher could not meet the Chief executives because they were busy or out of their office and could not delegate to someone. Others excused themselves upon learning that the research was for educational purposes probably because they felt it would not directly benefit them. There was also an element of not understanding the purpose of the study as evidenced by a letter in appendix 1 where one Chief Executive refused to grant the researcher an interview because he did not understand the study well despite having stated the objectives clearly in the Director General’s communication appearing in appendix 2. However, an explanation was later provided to clear the misunderstanding as outlined in appendix 3. Some interviews could not be carried out on the scheduled time and had to be pushed to new dates while others were never completed because of interruptions and office demands on the part of the respondents and alternative respondents had to be found. The researcher was also not able to meet all the members of parliament belonging to the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs and the Parliamentary Committee on Media Affairs. The researcher had planned to meet the Members of Parliament (MPs) during the sitting of the 2011/2012 budget session but the arrival of the researcher coincided with the rising of parliament. It was
logistically not possible to meet them in their constituencies because of distances involved, resource constraints and the scarcity of fuel in the country which greatly affected the mobility of the researcher. Furthermore, the legal Affairs committee had also been dissolved because its mandate had expired. However, the researcher made some effort to get in touch with some members who were closer to town having obtained their telephone numbers from parliament but only managed to get hold of four.

1.11 Definition of key concepts

Access to Information

The term access to information refers to communities or individuals having the right to acquire and use information which was not accessible before. This is as a result of being able to get hold of and use ICTs or the Internet. Access to information is essential to the well-being of people and can be achieved by creating an atmosphere conducive enough for free and independent sources of information, ICTs being available to everyone and people being able to use them, production of local information content and making all information that is produced using public funds freely available to all. This includes research and scientific information (UNESCO, 2009a:7,116).

Capacity-building

It is the enhancement of competencies and skills of individuals, communities, organisations and nations to exploit information and ICTs. The enhancement takes the form of training, formal and informal education including lifelong learning, infrastructure, systems, technology know-how and access to information (UNESCO, 2009a:117). Capacity building should also extend to research and innovations to enable individuals
generate their own knowledge, communities to generate local content and public institutions to generate national content (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007:29).

**Digital divide**

The imbalanced access to information or ICTs between developed and developing countries, urban and rural communities including different age groups (UNESCO, 2009a:20-21). The concept surfaced in the 1990s and was initially used for the technical and physical hindrances to the uptake of ICTs. Later it extended to social barriers emanating from who has access and enough competencies and who does not have in order to use ICTs. Digital divide could be attributed to the following factors: economic factors: where for example cost of ICTs is high, or income levels are low to access ICTs; social factors like different levels of education, geographical location, age and gender; cultural factors where people can’t appreciate the need for and use of ICTs because they haven’t identified any use for it, or anyone to emulate and; content-related reasons: when there is no information or services of interest, content is not available in local languages or local content is lacking (UNESCO, 2009b:16-17).

**Global information economy**

It is the world move from an industrial economy to an information-intensive driven economy. Information is considered and used in commerce and industry as a resource to improve productivity and competitiveness in global markets. In such an economy, information is the resource for economic growth (Mangla, 2003:96).

**ICT**

ICT stands for Information and Communications Technology (or technologies). It is the convergence of information technology and Communication technologies. It is an all-
encompassing term that is used to describe all technologies that enable the processing, storing and transfer of data and information electronically (Martin et al 1991:91).

**Information society**

It is a community whose improvements in social and economic well-being of the people depend largely on information and its use. Mangla (2003:93) explains, ‘in such a society, the living standards, patterns of work and leisure, the education systems, research and development activities, the market place are all influenced markedly by information’. It is a society whose economic foundation has shifted primarily from industrial to Information, as a result of technological advancements (UNESCO, 2009a:20).

**Information superhighway**

It is the global network of telecommunications and information technologies. It is a network in which information travels very fast and uses computers with high performance. It is used by the world for business, industry, government operations, education, entertainment, and informing citizens. It is also referred to as Global information infrastructure. The information superhighway has its origins in the USA. Legislation was developed in 1991 to connect all high-tech computer research centers together on a high-speed network and to support work into advanced data processing. The network was later in 1993 extended beyond Government and universities into offices and homes across the US. The network has since expanded beyond the frontiers of the USA to the rest of the world (Malhotra et al 1995: online).
IT
IT stands for Information Technology. It encompasses computers, software, networking and other equipment used to manage information. Particularly for capturing, storing, protecting, processing, transmitting and retrieving information (Martin et al 1991:91). Information technology is an essential medium for making information resources more widely available and increase in value.

Knowledge society
A society which is able to generate, access without restrictions and utilise knowledge for the social and economic development of its people. Knowledge is therefore, at the centre of any activity, be it economic, social or cultural. This term is often used interchangeably with the term ‘information society’. However, information society is a precursor to knowledge society. Knowledge is generated from information through interactions (UNESCO, 2009a:127, 21-22).

Legal and regulatory framework
The legal and regulatory framework refers to all relevant policies, laws, regulations and implementing institutions including mechanisms that together provide the framework for information services. It is meant to establish necessary standards and systems which will guarantee the right to information and promote the exploitation of information and ICTs. This is achieved through the establishment of a sound and a stable legal system by the legal bodies (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007:29).

National information systems
A collection of all inter-related institutions and professionals dealing with information in a country (Poliniere, 1975:2). The concept of a national information system embraces
libraries, documentation and information centers; organizations involved in generating, collecting, storing and disseminating information; industries manufacturing computers and other ICTs; mass media and; Research and Development institutions. Their roles complement each other and relate as a unit. A well-coordinated system entails better information services in a country (Mangla, 2003:96).

1.12 Organization of the thesis

The thesis comprises:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study. This chapter provides background, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, and limitations. It also gives an overview of the information services in Malawi.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review. The chapter covers the theoretical framework on which the study is based. It also reviews literature from research conducted by other scholars in the field of national information policy particularly on access to information, factors impeding the development of a national information policy, capacity building in information services and the legal and regulatory framework relating to information services.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology. The chapter covers the exploratory research design, the sampling procedure used and data collection techniques that were used.

Chapter 4: Data presentation and analysis. Results are presented, analyzed and interpreted in line with research questions.
Chapter 5: Discussion. Results are discussed and linked to existing literature, research questions and objectives.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations. Results are summarised, recommendations are made based on the findings, areas of further research are highlighted and conclusions are drawn from the results.

1.13 Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented the general introduction to the study. It looked at what a national information policy is the historical perspective of a national information policy in relation to government, motivation for national information policy development, National information policy development initiatives at international level and in Malawi, and an overview of information services in Malawi. The chapter further outlined the statement of the problem, research questions, aim and objectives. The following chapter looks at the literature reviewed and theoretical framework.
Chapter 2
Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi.

Literature review as defined by Becker and Bryman (2004:69) is ‘an assessment of existing knowledge both empirical and theoretical relating to your research topic, issue or question’. A literature review provides insights into work which has already been done in the area of interest and provides a background to your research. It therefore, provides a guide to one’s line of inquiry into the research problem. Flick (2006:59) states that literature review helps in determining information which already exists about the phenomenon under study or in an area. Literature review also provides the range of theories that are employed or talked about in the area of study. Furthermore, literature review reveals concepts that are in use and those that have not been agreed upon in the area under study. A researcher is also able to follow arguments on the topic of study and the use of particular methods. This helps a researcher to decide on the method to adopt. Literature review also reveals areas that have already been studied, the focus of previous studies and existing research gaps requiring further investigations (Flick, 2006).

Sources of literature reviewed in this study included journal articles both print and electronic, research reports, books, official reports, policies and the Internet. The
literature reviewed in this study relates to the four research questions and objectives of the study.

Silverman (2004:52) explains that a theory is ‘a set of concepts used to define and /or explain some phenomenon’. Robson (2002:61) defines theory as ‘an explanation of what is going on in a situation, phenomenon or whatever we are investigating.’ He further explains that a theory aligns a study to existing standard practice and ensures that one takes the right course of inquiry on the phenomenon under study. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008:39) a theoretical framework provides a guide for a researcher to determine concepts or elements to focus on when investigating phenomenon under study, the type of research questions to pose and how to interpret results of the study. A theoretical framework is also used to corroborate findings, provide alternative explanations, guide the course of action and provide preliminary concepts for devising a study or generating theory. In addition, it is meant to provide a guide on the methodology a researcher should employ in a study (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Kaniki 2004; Trent University, no date). Kaniki (2004:20) adds that a theoretical framework will assist researchers to develop good research problems.

The development of a national information policy has been a global trend advocated and supported by many international organizations. Countries have developed either explicit or implicit national information policies depending on the approach adopted. A significant number of countries in the world have an overall national information policy while others have developed information policies at sectoral or sub-sectoral level. There are a number of reasons countries have not developed a national information policy and
these reasons vary from country to country depending on historical, economic and cultural background (Rowland, 1996).

The following sections look at literature reviewed in this study relating to access to information; impediments to the development of a national information policy; capacity building in information services and the legal and regulatory framework in information services; and the theoretical framework on which this study is based.

2.2 Access to information

The first goal of a national information policy is to democratize access to information. This means individuals or communities having the right to acquire and use information not accessible before (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). Democratizing access to information requires that ICTs be available to everyone and that people are able to use them, local information content is produced and all information including research information produced using public funds becomes freely available to all (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007; UNESCO, 2009a). This section looks at access to information as a human right, access to government information, access to ICTs, and production of local content.

2.2.1 Access to information as a human right

Studies have shown that access to information, which is also referred to as freedom of information continues to receive greater attention as a human right issue worldwide than before. Lor and Britz (2007:388) think that access to information has now turned out to be a social right because of globalization. Participation in economic and political processes now depends on access to information. The right of access to information is
very fundamental to the production of knowledge. If a country is to gain a competitive edge at global level, investments have to be made in the production of knowledge and information. This means that there has to be a free flow of information and unrestricted knowledge. It is believed that countries that had achieved some level of democracy and freedom of information, such as Great Britain, were the first to experience the industrial revolution in the 19th Century (Lor and Britz, 2007:391).

At global level, access to information is guaranteed by international instruments such as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. At regional level, regional groupings have also re-affirmed the right to access to information by coming up with their own conventions in line with the UN declaration. The Organisation of African Unity, for example, on 27th June 1981 adopted the Africa (Banjul) Charter on Human and People’s Rights which came into force in 1986. Article 9 of the Banjul Charter re-affirms the commitment to access to information. At country level provisions for access to information have been made either through legislation or the constitution. (Right2info.org, no date:online). Malawi has a constitutional provision on access to information. Article 37 of the constitution of 1994 stipulates that ‘subject to any Act of parliament every person shall have the right of access to all information held by the state or any of its organs at any level of government in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his/her rights.’ However, access to information as provided for in the constitution has limitations. It is only guaranteed when there is legislation in place and the provision does not provide the time frame within which to enact the law (Sentala, 2008). Up to now Malawi does not have the legislation in place.
2.2.2 Access to government information

Studies have shown that access to government information remains problematic in many countries without national information policies. Muir and Oppenheim (2002:174-175) in their study which employed a desk-based literature survey on recent developments in national information policies worldwide regarding electronic government found that the trend with many governments has been to provide access to information that government wants people to have access to and not what people demand. They further note that the tendency was to publish in official publications which often do not reach the majority of the population. There have also been instances where governments have stopped collecting or publishing information they deem not suitable to them or which will work against them (Line, 2003:389). Governments generate a lot of information which is of value and relevance to society for scientific purposes and for informing the citizenry of their duties and rights as well as addressing their living standards, health and safety. Information programs therefore, should constitute an important task of public authorities. However, Enakrire and Onyenania (2007:21) note that information hoarding tendency is quite a common practice in Africa at different levels starting at personal, private organisations and government level. Governments tend to impose strict control on information they generate by often classifying it as confidential or secret. It is believed that when information becomes readily accessible, communities or individuals engage in more discussions or debate and this gives rise to innovation. Lor and Britz (2007:394) argue that Governments have therefore, a moral responsibility of creating an environment that guarantees the right to access information as well as to utilize it. This can only be achieved through the development of an
enabling information policy regime on access to information. Fitzgerald (2010:509) observes that Australia is one of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries which does not have a coherent national information policy statement in relation to access and use as a result of which Australians continue to experience problems of accessing government information contrary to the developments advocated by the European Union (EU), US and many other countries for the past decade and a half.

It is pleasing to note that there is a global move which is slowly gathering momentum regarding open access particularly to research information funded from public resources. National governments and international organisations have been involved in the development of policies and systems aimed at improving access to and use of information produced by governments and from publicly funded research organisations (Fitzgerald, 2010). Key policy statements have been developed on access to public sector information and results from publicly funded research which underscores the importance of open access. Examples include the 2003 Berlin declaration; the Budapest open access initiative of 2002; Bethesda statement on open access publishing of 2003 and; the development of open access digital repositories and on-line journals (Fitzgerald, 2010). However, Malawi does not have any policy or legislation to oblige government or its institutions to grant access to information it produces despite having a constitutional provision as highlighted earlier (Cf 2.3.6.1). As a result people continue to experience challenges to have access to information generated by government or its institutions (Ng’ambi, 2010). Development of a national information policy is therefore imperative in facilitating access to information produced by government or its agents.
The concept of E-government

Governments worldwide have taken advantage of ICTs to deliver information and services online through the Internet and other electronic means often referred to as “e-governance.” Muir and Oppenheim (2002) conducted a study using desk-based literature survey on new developments in national information policy regarding universal access addressing the digital divide. The study involved a number of countries including Canada, USA, EU countries, South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand covering the period between 1997 and 2001. The study found that countries that developed national information policies and legislation on secure and efficient use of electronic communication made great strides in promoting e-government initiatives. For instance Canada is one of the countries that put up legislation on e-government and became the first country in the world to have all its public libraries and schools connected to the Internet in 1999. Asian countries like Hong Kong and Singapore are believed to have progressed fast with their e-government programmes through development of enabling national information policies. Hong Kong had 65% of its services available online as of 2002. The e-government concept provides a right to everyone to receive electronic information disseminated by government on its own initiative. One of the most significant developments towards achieving e-government has been the emergency of government portals meant to provide an interactive one-stop government web service centre which integrates all government information and services from various government agencies (Muir and Oppenheim, 2002:177,183). Malawi does not have a policy or legislation in place to guide the development of e-government. According to Lead Associates (2011) Malawi is considered to be below the
level of e-government development expected within its low per capita group. Lead Associates (2011) also observes that ICT development in Malawi is generally rated low in international rankings. The researcher feels that e-government efforts in Malawi are bound to fail in the absence of a national information policy and related legislation. The country continues to face Internet problems coupled with low information literacy levels. Information literacy entails the acquisition of skills so that one is able to recognise the need for information, find appropriate information from a variety of sources, use ICTs, evaluate the information and utilise it to produce knowledge (Nassimbeni and de Jager, 2000; Lor and Britz, 2010). Furthermore content on the Internet is generally in English and most people in Malawi are literate in local languages only. The way out is to put in place policy measures that will facilitate the development of the infrastructure and enhancement of information literacy.

2.2.3 Access to ICTs

Information scientists acknowledge that advancements in ICTs have come along with disparities in access to information, ICTs and use (Makin and Craven, 1999; Liu, 1996; Enakrire and Onyenania, 2007; Ani et al 2007; Law, 2004; Afullo, 2000). These disparities are prevalent between developed and developing countries, urban and rural communities, gender and age groups, including differences in education levels. According to Internet world statistics produced by Miniwatts Marketing Group (2012:online) a third of the world’s population is on-line with only 6.2% of the users from Africa. Malawi contributes 0.5% of the African users (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012:online). Ani et al (2007:358-359) observe that poor ICT infrastructure, poverty, low levels of education and lack of adequately trained personnel impede access to the
Internet in Africa. However, studies have shown that countries that have developed information policies have been able to contain the digital divide. Ani et al (2007:359) observe that developed countries such as Canada, Hong Kong, developed information policies to ensure universal access to information irrespective of geographical location, social and economic conditions. A country like Singapore has never regarded digital divide as a serious issue because of government policy on achieving an information economy. School children are assigned e-mail accounts as early as the age of five. More than 40% of the homes in Singapore have online access. Those without Internet access at home have a lot of alternative places to connect to e-government as most schools and libraries are fully networked (Muir and Oppenheim, 2002:181; Ani et al 2007:357). This is quite contrary to the situation in Malawi. According to a review carried out by Lead Associates (2011:13) on the civil service ICT policy found that primary school children in Malawi do not have access to computers or Internet at school. The review also found that less than 5% of the secondary schools in Malawi have a computer or Internet access; less than 20% of tertiary schools in Malawi have a computer for student use and less than 10% have Internet access. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has no budget line for ICTs for schools. Ameen and Gorman (2008:101) believe that the gap between the digitally advantaged and disadvantaged will continue to widen despite advancements in ICTs. The researcher shares the same view as long as national information policies are not put in place and socio-economic disparities continue to exist among individuals, societies or nations digital divide will never be bridged. Developing countries like Malawi where Internet penetration is as low as 4.5% (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012:online) will
continue experiencing the digital divide from two fronts. The first one is in terms of the gap on production of content which has always been there. The second one is in terms of the availability and accessibility of ICTs. Probably, it is a question of the extent to which the digital divide should be a concern. Enakrire and Onyenania (2007:21-26) observe that Africa is yet to reach the levels attained by the rest of the world in harnessing information through opportunities being offered by the IT revolution. In Africa, governments have not paid attention to the formulation of national information policies as a result of which no significant developments have taken place on the infrastructure (Enakrire and Onyenania, 2007). Governments need to revisit their roles, regulations and policies if Africa is to benefit from ICTs and develop into an information society and consequently into a knowledge society (Enakrire and Onyenania, 2007). Malawi will therefore need an overarching national information policy to address such multifaceted challenges of the digital divide.

2.2.4 Libraries and access to information

Studies have revealed that libraries are playing a significant role in bridging the digital divide particularly in developed countries. Hamilton and Pors (2003:411-413) observe that most of the countries in the West have information policies that require public libraries to provide Internet access to clients. A report released by the UK Government Social Exclusion Unit in 1998 underscores the significance of communities having access to information with libraries assuming the role of points of access to information. The UK Government put up a strategy to enhance social inclusion which emphasized on the capability of libraries to provide information. EU governments also took urgent steps to address the effects of social exclusion and libraries took centre stage in most of
the activities. Libraries have therefore become information gateways for those that are socially excluded (Hamilton and Pors, 2003:409). For instance, public libraries in the US experienced a rise in the number of clients due to the economic recession which rendered many people jobless. Public libraries became handy for those looking for re-employment; acquire new skills, following up on unemployment benefits, and those who wanted to avoid foreclosure of their homes. Realizing the importance of policy on information, Asian countries also formulated development plans and visions to 2020 which advocate for IT application to modernise library services by focusing on digital and e-library development (Ameen and Gorman, 2008:99).

However, the trend in Malawi is different where there are inadequate local and functional public libraries. Enakrire and Onyenania (2007:20) observe that African countries are reluctant to establish more public libraries as a result of which the library system in Africa cannot meet the needs of their users. Policy makers view libraries as not being significant service providers in national development. The National Authorities of Public Libraries in Europe (NAPLE) conducted a survey in 2002 in European countries which revealed that the development of public libraries in Europe is significantly attributed to the development of national information policies (Hamilton and Pors, 2003:408). The absence of a national information policy for coordinating information services could be the origin of the many challenges Malawi is facing in the information sector.

2.2.5 Generation of knowledge (Content)

The level of production and exploitation of knowledge determines the level of economic development of a country. Advanced economies are distinguished by the immense
generation and utilisation of knowledge and are referred to as knowledge societies (Ondari-Okemwa, 2004:373). Countries wishing to transform themselves into knowledge societies have developed enabling policies and some are in the process of developing such policies. Countries have realized that they can only compete favourably at international level if they have such policies and that they do not want to lag behind in the world race towards knowledge societies. These policies are paying particular attention to ICTs, information awareness and literacy among societies. The production of knowledge largely depends on higher education and research and development with a focus on the use of modern ICTs (Lor and Britz, 2007). However, higher education institutions in Africa are under-resourced with very little research and development going on. To date, research and development expenditure in Africa is very low. In most African countries, research and development expenditure stands at less than 0.5% of the GDP (Stamm and Knuth, 2010). UNESCO’s recommendation is that countries should devote at least 1% of the GDP to research and development. The recommendation was also adopted by the African Union (AU) Summit in January 2007 (UNESCO, 2010:281). According to a survey commissioned by the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) (2010) in 19 African countries between 2009 and 2010 indicates that Malawi, South Africa and Uganda were spending above 1% of the GDP on research and development. This is quite a significant achievement for Malawi considering that many countries have not been able to attain such a feat. However, it remains to be seen how this feat will contribute to the production of knowledge in the absence of a national information policy in Malawi which may be relied on to enhance the flow and sharing of information. A survey carried out by the United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) revealed that Africa generates 0.4% of the world’s information content and 0.38% is from South Africa alone. The 2012 knowledge index of the World Bank (2012b:online) ranked Malawi at position 124 out of 146 countries rated in the World. Malawi scored 1.55 on the index while top of the list was Sweden with a score of 9.14. At continental level, Malawi ranked 15 out of the 31 countries rated in Africa. South Africa came first on the list with a score of 5.45. The knowledge index measures a country’s ability to generate, adopt and diffuse knowledge. It is a simple average of the four sub-indexes of the knowledge economy namely, economic incentive and institutional regime, innovation and technological adoption, education and training, and ICTs (World Bank, 2012b:online).

Literature also shows that most of the writers from African countries, including Malawi tend to publish with renowned publishers abroad and they have to adhere to their policies. This poses challenges to the development of collections with local content from local authors (Enakrire and Onyenania, 2007:24). Governments have not put up national information policy measures to encourage production of local content of interest. Singapore, in making use of the concept of the knowledge society made huge strides in developing its economy to where it is now. Singapore developed a policy which was aimed at making it an ‘intelligent island’ with a state of the art ICT infrastructure and with very educated employees who were able to exploit information (Lor and Britz, 2007:391). Prospects for African countries like Malawi to transform into a knowledge society are currently oblique. Ondari-Okemwa (2004:362) contends that Africa has missed the information society era and wonders if Africa will not miss the knowledge era as well. Knowledge generation requires a sound infrastructure for its flow.
and management, which is not available in Africa. However, Lor and Britz (2010:391) see a ray of hope only if African countries can leap-frog with the use of modern ICTs to catch up with more advanced nations by skipping certain economic development stages. They believe this is worth exploring despite being an enormous challenge. The researcher has doubts in the case of Malawi to develop into a knowledge society straight away because an information society is a precursor to a knowledge society. Malawi has not paid much attention to the creation of an enabling environment through formulation of national information policy. As a result, the ICT infrastructure is limited and so is the flow of information and its utilisation for Malawi to develop into a knowledge society.

2.3. Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy

There are a number of factors that contribute to the absence of an overarching national information policy.

2.3.1. Do countries need implicit or explicit national information policies

Orna (2008:550) explains that implicit national information policies are policies which are not clearly stated. The policy in this case is to have no formal policy and to leave it to the marketplace. On the other hand explicit policies are policies which are clearly spelt out and are formalized in an official document.

There is discussion in literature among information scientists on whether countries need implicit or explicit national information policies in order to develop into an information society (Owen et al 2012; UNESCO, 2009a; Orna 2008; Smith, 2002; Rowland, 1996;
Mchombu and Miti, no date;). Orna (2008:551) observes that countries like UK, USA, and Netherlands, which are using the market approach, do not have explicit national information policies but have strong information industries. One is therefore bound to query the need for countries to develop explicit national information policies. UNESCO (2009a: 44) acknowledges that countries which have made advances towards achieving information societies are those that have produced overall information policy documents. UNESCO (2009a:45) advances what are termed as three fundamental objectives of a national information policy. The first one is to democratize access to information. This entails provision and use of information and ICTs within the reach of all persons regardless of any barrier. The second objective is to develop capacities by educating society to be more effective users of ICTs and services at all levels of formal and informal education. In particular, to build capacity for research and technological innovation, and generation of national content on the part of public institutions and local contents on the part of different social groups. The third objective is to achieve an adequate legal and regulatory framework. The legal and regulatory frameworks here refer to a series of applicable policies, laws, regulation and executing institutions including mechanisms that together provide the framework. It is necessary that countries address the legal, regulatory and institutional issues which impede the development of national information services and connectivity to both local and global information networks.

2.3.2 National information policy or national information policies

There are two divergent views coming from information scientists on whether countries should pursue the development of a national information policy or national information
policies targeting specific information sectors or sub-sectors. Some have argued that governments should strive to develop an all-encompassing national information policy which would accommodate all the information sub-sectors and at the same time address issues of linkages among them (UNESCO, 2009a:37). Since an information society comprises many interrelated sectors and sub-sectors, it would be very difficult to approach each one of them in an isolated way. On the other hand, information scientists are advancing the view that although most of the literature refers to national information policy in the singular, there is not an all-encompassing policy, rather information policies that address specific issues in specific sectors (Rowland 1996:14; Mchombu and Miti, no date:237). If all the sectors, as diverse as they are, were dealt with in one national information policy, Mchombu and Miti (no date:239) observe that it would be complex to formulate and difficult to implement. The envisaged problem with this approach of sectoral policies is that it may breed fragmentation, contradictions and repetitions of issues among the policies. Sectors therefore, need guidance from an overarching policy

2.3.3 What prevents countries from developing a national information policy

Information scientists have advanced a number of other reasons that impede the development of a national information policy. One of the reasons is the lack of clarity on the definition of the concept of a national information policy which has had a substantial effect on the way policy is formulated and implemented. For instance, Stone (1996:Online) observes that national information policy is often confused with a national information strategy and a national information plan. Stone further explains that a strategy will answer the question of “how” while a plan will look at “mechanisms”
required for implementation. This confusion has certainly contributed to the failure of countries to successfully implement national information policy development processes.

Researchers contend that poor government’s involvement in the provision of information has also contributed to the problem, particularly in Africa. Governments have restricted the flow of information through classification of information as secret and having control over mass media to determine what may be published. Governments have also introduced censorship, and the rural-urban divide in information services. They have denied the public the right of access to government information and they have hustled writers (Mchombu and Miti, no date:236). Ayoo and Otike (2002:351–356) writing on factors impeding the development of a national information policy in Kenya, are of the view that poor recognition of the relevance of information in development by government has contributed to the status-quo. They also cite insufficient funds, transferring of policy makers between government departments, underdeveloped information infrastructure; lack of committed information professionals and qualified man power to champion and drive the policy formulation process; advancements in information technologies and skills development, and lack of user-tailored services, as having alienated governments to national information policy. Uhegbu (2004:44-46) has similar sentiments regarding national information policy impediments in Nigeria. Uhegbu reckons that lack of Government’s interest in information services, particularly the role of information in economic, scientific and technological advancement is not appreciated. Uhegbu further observes that lack of a stable economy and politics where every new government brings in new policies; underdeveloped information professional associations with no passion and direction to pursue and drive the process of national
information policy; dire information facilities for research and publishing; low literacy rates and; government interference in the functions of information institutions have been hindrances to the development of the policy.

Browne (1997) also notes that a number of problems relating to consistency and integration of policies emanate from the lack of recognition of the role of information. Browne further notes that the manner in which government’s policy initiatives are handled has also contributed to the shortcomings. Governments have often times developed policies in response to demands raised by communities or powerful lobbying groups. It is evident that these groups have not exerted enough pressure related to information matters to result into a coherent national information policy.

2.4 Capacity building in information services

The second goal of a national information policy is to build capacities. Capacity building refers to the enhancement of competencies and skills of individuals, communities, organizations and nations to exploit information and ICTs. The enhancement takes the form of training, formal and informal education including lifelong learning, and infrastructure (Pajaro and Betancourt 2007; UNESCO, 2009a). Pajaro and Betancourt (2007: 29) add that capacity building extends to research and innovations to enable individuals generate their own knowledge, communities to generate local content and public institutions to generate national content.

According to Montviloff (1990:6) information services is ‘the provision of information and data through systems and networks of different types in the public and private sectors’. Montviloff (1990:6) further explains that information service could be in the form of ‘data
banks, data bases, library systems, library services, documentation centres and services; information analysis, consolidation and repackaging centres and services; archives, and statistical services'.

This section looks at human resources development encompassing education and training, and information literacy and; infrastructure development covering telecommunications and libraries.

2.4.1 Human resource development

People who are highly qualified serve as a critical resource in building up a knowledge society. Lor and Britz (2000) describe a knowledge society as a society which is pre-occupied with knowledge production, distribution and use supported by a high level of education and use of modern ICTs. Nowadays a country will gain a competitive edge at global level, if it makes investments in the production of knowledge. Smith (2003:443) considers human resource development as the enhancement of people’s competencies related to work. It could be competencies of people operating as individuals or groups or in an organisation. The focus is on people acquiring the knowledge, understanding, skills and training that will improve their performance. Society is also required to possess some level of information literacy in order for individuals to access information and be able to utilise it. Lor and Britz (2007:395) observe that a deliberate effort must be made when developing human resources to include people from across society including women and the underprivileged groups to be in line with the principle of equal opportunities for all. They assert that human resource development becomes effective if it is considered as a continuous process to enhance knowledge and skills in the rapid changing environment.
2.4.1.1 Education and training

Education and training are essential components of capacity building. Different sectors in any economy rely on a good education system to produce the necessary human resources a country needs for its competitive advantage in the global economy. Education and training facilitate access to knowledge and its utilisation. The importance of human resource development is well recognised by governments, private sector, associations and individuals. At national level governments have established ministries and departments responsible for education and training at various levels and have gone further to develop policies on human resources development (Smith, 2003:444). Professional bodies at national and international levels have also laid emphasis on and facilitated continuing professional education for their members. For instance IFLA recognises the importance of continuing professional development and workplace learning as evidenced by the establishment of a unit responsible for promoting continuing education and workplace learning programmes at an international level. This is against the realization that there are new changes taking place in societies which directly affect libraries and information services. It has therefore become necessary that experts working in libraries and the entire information sector upgrade their skills, knowledge and abilities in order to respond and cope with such rapid and diverse changes (Smith, 2003:443).

However, literature indicates that in Africa emphasis is on formal education with little attention to informal education. The setback with formal education as observed by Ondari-Okemwa (2004:371) is that it only takes care of a small proportion of people leaving out the majority of the citizenry. In addition, most countries in Africa have put
basic education as a priority (Stamm and Knuth, 2010). This is also true for Malawi where the current statement of the National Education Sector Plan for 2008 to 2017 highlights basic education as the main strategic priority area (MoEST, 2008). However, the plan has defined basic education to include early childhood development, non-formal education (out-of-school youth, adult literacy and complimentary basic education) and primary school education. This is a global concept which the Ministry has now adopted to replace the old understanding Malawi had that basic education meant primary school education only (MoEST, 2008). The ministry has broadened up the sphere of basic education so that more people who were originally left out are accommodated. However, the approach taken in the plan may end up turning non-formal education into formal education. The approach proposes to use the same curriculum used for formal primary school education but with a reduced number of years one has to undergo through non-formal education.

Training of human resources in Malawi in the information sector has not followed any consolidated policy in the absence of a national information policy. Training policies in the sector have been developed at institutional level. For instance Lead Associates (2011) acknowledge that there is no government-wide IT human resources development plan for Malawi. In addition, policies developed so far have not stressed on training. The Communications Sector Policy of 1998 and the Rural Telecommunications Policy of 2002 have not laid any emphasis on training and development of human resources. Where it has been mentioned, it is part of the commercialisation process of government entities focusing on marketing and customer care. However, the draft ICT policy has highlighted human resources development in
ICTs as one of its strategic elements. Nonetheless University of Malawi has programmes at Bachelor’s degree level in computer science, information technology, electronics and telecommunication engineering and Master’s degree programmes in informatics and computer science (University of Malawi, 2012: online). Mzuzu University has programmes at Bachelor’s degree level in library and information science, Information and Communication Technology and a Master’s degree programme in information theory coding and cryptography (Mzuzu university, 2012:online). National College of Information Technology (NACIT) under DISTMIS also offers diploma and degree courses in information technology (Malawi government, 2012:online). The Malawi Library Association is also offering a certificate course in Library and Information Science (Uta, 2005). The researcher believes that the formulation of a national information policy would consolidate the various initiatives on the development of capacities to generate and access knowledge through formal and informal education.

2.4.1.2 Information literacy

Studies have shown that countries that have included information literacy in their school curriculum have developed societies with lifelong skills for accessing and utilizing information to generate knowledge (Enakrire and Onyenania, 2007). Information literacy entails: recognizing the need for information and how to satisfy the need; acquiring skills to conduct a search and accessing information using ICTs; acquiring competencies to appraise and be able to select accurate and reliable information from different sources and; acquiring competencies to organize and exploit information to generate new knowledge out of it (Ameen and Gorman, 2008:102; Nassimbeni and de Jager, 2000:194; Kavulya, 2003:219).
Developed countries came up with policies to introduce information literacy in their school curricula in order to improve information literacy further. On the contrary, students in Malawi at different levels still struggle with issues regarding information services provided by libraries and other sources like the Internet. Information literacy has not been included in the school curriculum in Malawi as evidenced by the large incidents of students who are not able to access and utilise available information sources and resources (Enakriere and Onyenania, 2007). Studies conducted at a number of African universities including the University of Malawi on access to subscribed on-line databases, confirm the low level of information literacy among students and staff leading to underutilization of digital resources (Ameen and Gorman, 2008:100; Harle, 2010:24-26). Harle (2010) carried out a case study investigating researchers’ access to the latest academic information, in the form of refereed journals and other scholarly materials, in Eastern and Southern African Universities comprising University of Malawi, University of Nairobi, National University of Rwanda and University of Dare-salaam. Harle used questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and desk research to collect data for the study. Data were collected from 240 researchers and 23 librarians. The study revealed that researchers and students had inadequate competencies to effectively use e-resources. They didn’t have skills to search and explore databases, and to successfully access and download full-text articles from the databases. Many researchers were also not aware of the titles they could access through their libraries. This meant that valuable resources the universities had subscribed to were not optimally used (Harle, 2010:viii). For university students it is essential that they acquire high level of information literacy to enhance their competitive
edge in society. It is therefore, not surprising that many universities in Africa continue adopting the use of ICTs to manage and access information in their libraries. Information literacy programs at university take the form of: library orientation, library instructions offered on demand when the learner wants skills to use them, and reference services. A few universities have introduced compulsory undergraduate courses where students are taught information skills for lifelong learning. For instance at University of Cape Town in South Africa where the School of Librarianship negotiated with the faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities to offer a single semester course to undergraduates on ‘Information society tools and skills’ in order to impart information skills to students for lifelong learning (Nassimbeni and de Jager, 2000); and at University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University and Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Kenya where undergraduate students are taught ‘Communication Skills Course’ in order to instill skills relating to library, reading and writing (Kavulya, 2003). Information literacy empowers students with lifelong skills for locating and handling information searches on their own and be able to manage their learning even beyond the formal education system as students move into society to assume different responsibilities (Kavulya, 2003:216-220). Malawi must seriously consider putting up policies that lay emphasis on skills development besides infrastructure, if the country is to develop into a knowledge society. Ameen and Gorman (2008:106) in a study which explored the state of information and digital literacy in developing countries and how it affects national development using Pakistan as a case study found that most government policies are laying heavy emphasis on ICT infrastructure with little regard on competencies to use the resources. The researcher feels that Malawi government needs to deal with skills
deficiency through policy interventions that will aim at introducing information literacy in the school curriculum. Information literacy is one of the elements of a national information policy.

2.4.2 Information infrastructure

Studies have shown that the development of information infrastructure requires a supporting national information policy (Liu, 1996; Cacaly and Le Coadic, 2007). The development of the global information infrastructure for instance, was as a result of a national information policy and high political commitment to maintain leadership in the information industry. The American Government formulated a policy for the establishment of an information infrastructure to strengthen their research and development system by linking up research and education establishments with an information superhighway to maximise information flow and thereby enhancing access to information. The infrastructure was later on extended to other areas, offices and people’s homes (Liu, 1996; Global Risk Management Network: online). China is believed to have followed a similar path by first developing a national information policy and a high technology research and development program which regarded IT as a major priority component (Liu, 1996). One issue to note is that these initiatives in both countries, America and China, were started at top political level with presidents who had the vision and pursued it through the development of a national information policy. Developments in Malawi are on the contrary. Government is busy with initiatives of automating government administrative functions under the guise of enhancing governance, instead of putting up national information policies for high speed ICT infrastructure to support education, research and development as the two countries did.
The approach taken will not develop Malawi’s information infrastructure to enable it become an information society and consequently a knowledge society. An information society is a society which places more emphasis on access and use of ICTs. On the other hand a knowledge society places more emphasis on production, distribution and use of information and knowledge, use of modern ICTs and the development of human capacity (Lor and Britz, 2007:388). Malawi needs to learn from the French government on how they stopped their dependence on Unites States of America for their Science and Technology (S&T) information. The French were worried of exposing their competitive intelligence if they continued depending on America for their information needs. Studies indicate that France put up initiatives to develop a national information policy in order to stop depending on America for its S&T information and to improve France’s competitive position (Cacaly and Le Coadic, 2007:380-381). One would probably think that Malawi may not be serious with efforts to bridge the digital divide and is comfortable with continued dependence on the West for information. Otherwise the government should have first been preoccupied with the formulation of a national information policy.

**Telecommunications infrastructure**

Literature indicates that a large component of the required infrastructure for information superhighway is already available in developed countries transmitting high volumes of information at very high speed. Effective participation in the global information superhighway therefore, requires developing countries to formulate national information policies for the telecommunications infrastructure to match the standards of the global network (Afullo, 2000:206).
Studies have revealed that telecommunications infrastructure is still underdeveloped in developing countries to effectively participate in the global network. For example 29 of the African countries belong to the group of 39 least connected countries in the world and have tele-densities of lower than 2.3% (ITU, 2012). Tele-density refers to the number of telephone lines per a hundred people (Monk, 2003). Afullo (2000:208) contends that a country needs a tele-density of 25-30% to transform into a modern economy. Malawi has a teledensity of 1.42% (ITU, 2012). It therefore remains a big challenge for Malawi to attain the required tele-density given the enormous financial resources required and the dire economic situation in the country. As a result Malawi continues to lag behind in the use of the Internet despite the world experiencing continued growth in the number of Internet users. Statistics indicate that there are 2.3 billion Internet users worldwide representing 32.7% of the world total population. Africa has 6.2% of the users with a penetration rate of 13.5% against the world penetration rate of 32.7%. Malawi contributes 0.5% of the users in Africa with a penetration rate of 4.5% (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012:online). According to Leading Associates (2011), Malawi is generally rated low in international rankings of telecommunication and ICT development. For instance Malawi is rated 144 out of 155 countries on the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Index (ITU, 2012). The advent of the fibre optic cable network on Africa’s coastal line seems to be the answer to connectivity and high speed Internet to Malawi. There are several submarine cables laid by different companies around Africa with landings in a significant number of coastal countries in West, South and East Africa. Malawi is currently connected through Mozambique and Tanzania (Leading Associates, 2011). However, it remains to be seen
how affordable the connectivity will be to Malawi in the absence of a national information policy. Cost of accessing Internet is one of the critical issues to the diffusion of Internet in Malawi. Telephone tariffs besides cost of Internet connections and personal computers are often beyond the means of most residents of Malawi and are a deterrent (Bichler, 2008). This puts the poor at a disadvantage because opportunities of accessing the infrastructure are limited and therefore majority are excluded from accessing essential information. The high cost of accessing the Internet defeats initiatives of creating equal opportunities for all to have access to information infrastructure. The USA’s policy decision to have ‘free wireless Internet cities’ and the Egyptian Government to subsidise access to Internet, are examples of government policy commitment towards promoting access to information (Lor and Britz, 2007:392). The telecommunications sector has over the years gone through a number of reforms aimed at developing the sector having realized the critical role it plays in socio-economic growth. Most governments have privatized many of the state owned industries following international trends. Privatization in Africa has centered on bringing international operators and has accorded countries with an inflow of capital, management improvements, better efficiency in service delivery and coverage. (ITU, 2011:5-5; Afullo, 2000:210-2011). A significant number of countries in Africa have also established regulatory authorities in the telecommunication sector following the liberalization. (Afullo, 2000:210). However, the reforms have slowed down over the years because of the global economic recess (ITU, 2011:5-5). As indicated earlier in Chapter one (Cf 1.3) Malawi liberalised the telecommunication sector and also established a regulatory authority in 2000 called Malawi Communications Regulatory
Authority following the Communications Act of 1998. According to the Act, MACRA is responsible for regulating the provision of, telecommunications networks and services, broadcasting, postal services, and management of radio frequencies (spectrum). However, the penetration rate and usage of ICTs still remains low in Malawi.

2.5 Legal and regulatory framework

The third goal of a national information policy is to achieve an adequate legal and regulatory framework. The framework refers to all relevant policies, laws, regulations and implementing institutions including mechanisms that together provide the framework for information services. It is meant to guarantee the right to information and promote the exploitation of information and ICTs (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007:29). Access to information has to be considered alongside the legal framework which would address issues of information confidentiality and right of privacy, censorship, ethics, dissemination of central government information, public access to government information, publication deposit law, and library law (Liu, 1996).

2.5.1 Legislation on access to information

Legal frameworks are required to facilitate access and utilisation of information within and across national boundaries besides adopting the necessary technical standards and infrastructure. Access to information is not only dependent on advancements in ICT and social factors but will also be determined by legal issues. However, the focus to date has been on the technology as a means of improving access to information without paying much attention to the legal environment and IPR issues (Fitzgerald, 2010:514).
There has been a growing recognition of access to information as a basic human right by many countries in the world (Cf 2.3.6.1). At least 80 countries have so far adopted legislation allowing the citizenry to request and receive government information. In some of the countries access to information legislation is referred to as freedom of information. A few other nations have prepared draft legislation on access to information awaiting adoption by government. Sixty countries including Malawi have only constitutional provisions on access to information. However, 53 of the 60 countries have explicitly guaranteed access to information in their constitutions while the other seven have implicitly expressed access to information in their constitutions (Right2info.org, no date:online). The principle behind legislation on access to information is that government information should be readily accessible unless there are valid reasons for not accessing it and an explanation has to be provided. It also spells out the type of information to be made available to the public. Furthermore, it requires that an autonomous office be set up where people can lodge their complaints against denied access. Legislation on access to information is also meant to allow people have authority over personal data (Muir and Oppenheim, 2002:470-472). The rate at which legislation is being developed and adopted differs from country to country depending on the system of government. Some countries have moved faster in developing and adopting legislation on access to information than others. The Nordic countries for instance were among the first to put in place legislation because of their long established freedom of information unlike countries with a monarch system that are known for their long tradition of secrecy were not enthusiastic to adopt legislation on freedom of information (Muir and Oppenheim, 2002:470-472). The concept of access to
information is not well recognised in Africa despite the adoption of the 1982 African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People’s Rights and the October 2002 Declaration of Freedom of Expression in Africa. African countries have been slow in enacting legislation on access to information. Only eight countries have so far developed legislation on access to information. These countries include: South Africa enacted the legislation in 2000, Angola in 2002, Zimbabwe in 2002, Uganda in 2005, Liberia in 2010, Ethiopia in 2008, Guinea Conakry in 2010, and Nigeria 2011 (right2info.org, no date:online).

However, many regard the Zimbabwe’s Access to Information and Privacy Act as being more of a hindrance than a guarantee to access to information and at times it is excluded from the list of access to information legislation (Right2info.org, no date:online). Only 16 countries in Africa have constitutional provisions which guarantee access to information and include: Burkina Faso adopted the constitution in 1993, Cameroon in 1996, Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006, Eritrea in 1997, Ghana in 1992, Guinea Bissau in 1996, Kenya in 2010, Madagascar in 1992, Morocco in 2011, Mozambique in 1990, Senegal in 2001, Seychelles in 1993, South Africa in 1996, Tanzania in 1977, Uganda in 1995 and Malawi in 1994 (Right2info.org, no date:online). Very few countries like South Africa and Uganda, besides having constitutional provisions, have also enacted laws on access to information.

2.5.2 Privacy and data protection

Advancements in ICTs have eased the manner in which people and organizations collect, share and transmit large volumes of information. However, the technology has
also brought serious threats to privacy. One can easily encroach into other people’s privacy unchecked. Quimbo (2003:22) defines privacy as the control an individual has over the terms under which personal information is acquired, disclosed and used. Privacy is a basic human right as enshrined in article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Once personal data has been exposed it is easier for others to interfere with one’s life. However, others have argued that stringent information disclosure regime would hinder e-commerce because it depends to a larger extent on users’ data. The challenge has been to strike a proper balance between legitimate need to collect information and the need to protect privacy (Quimbo, 2003:22).

Available literature indicates that most of the developed countries have data protection legislation. International instruments such as OECD guidelines of 1980 on protection of privacy and trans-boarder flow of personal data have been the basis of national legislation in these countries. International instruments are meant to harmonise national legislation in different countries so that they become compatible and enable free flow of data amongst them and move towards a single market (Muir and Oppenheimer, 2002:476). According to a desk based literature survey conducted by Muir and Oppenheimer (2002) on the new developments in national information policies regarding legislation on copyright, freedom of information and data protection found that countries that have not adopted international instruments find it difficult to share data with those that have developed legislation. Quimbo (2003:26) observes that consumer protection and privacy is the responsibility of both the government and the private sector. Government has to ensure that proper legislation is in place to protect consumers while the private sector must implement meaningful, user friendly and self-regulatory privacy
regimes. However, some countries because of crimes related to the Internet have developed legislation to access personal data of users. For instance the USA Patriot Act was enacted after the September 11 attack. The legislation is aimed at counteracting terrorism and cyber terrorism. Under this law, USA law enforcers and intelligence can spy on web surfing of Americans. Internet service providers are also supposed to hand over to government all non-content information to law enforcement unit without obtaining a court order. The information includes session time, duration, temporarily assigned network address, means and sources of payment, including credit card and bank account number (Quimbo, 2003:28-29). Malawi does not have specific legislation dealing with data protection or privacy. However, there is a provision on privacy in Article 21 of the 1994 Malawi Constitution which stipulates that 'every person shall have the right to personal privacy, which shall include the right not to be subject to searches of his or her person, home or property; the seizure of private possessions; or interference with private communications, including mail and all forms of telecommunications.' Some legal experts have interpreted this provision as also encompassing personal information (Norton Rose Group, 2011). In addition, Malawi uses other pieces of legislation to guarantee data protection and privacy. For instance Credit Reference Bureau Act of 2010 which requires credit bureaus to protect their customers’ credit information in their databases and that it remains confidential (Norton Rose Group, 2011).

2.5.3 Intellectual property

There is debate in literature between owners and users of information on access to information. Access to content brings in issues of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). IPR
comprise two parts, industrial property rights which cover inventions (patents),
trademarks, industrial designs etc.; and copyright which covers literary and artistic work
(novels, poems, music, drama, paintings, photographs) (WIPO, 2004). Lor and Britz
(2007:392-393) observe that IPR regimes are meant to fairly compensate owners of
information, creators, and distributors but not to limit access to essential information.
However, users feel that there is an imbalance which tends to favour the owners of
information. Access to information has become difficult because of stringent application
of IPR legislation. IPR regimes have been designed in such a way that they are bent on
providing owners of information with more revenue than providing access to information.
EU countries and the US have established international standards protecting IPR
owners worldwide (Lor and Britz, 2007:395). Most of the IPR owners are from the
developed countries that produce the bulk of information. Developing countries are
therefore at a disadvantage because they have to acquire information from developed
countries. This affects access to information because of costs. Developed countries feel
this is an attempt to deprive them of their sovereignty since their laws will have to be
aligned to these international agreements (Lor and Britz, 2007). Furthermore, the
application of the stringent IPR removes essential information from the public domain
into a private domain (Lor and Britz, 2007). Currently Malawi does not have an IP policy.
However there are IP laws which comprise the Trade Marks Act (Cap. 49: 01), Patents
Act (Cap. 49: 02), Copyright Act (Cap. 49: 03), Registered Designs Act (Cap. 49: 05)
and Trade Descriptions Act (Cap. 49: 04) of the Laws of Malawi. Other IP related
legislation includes the Competition and Fair Trading Act of 1998 and the Environment
Management Act of 1996. The trade marks, patents and registered designs were
enacted during the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1958. They have not been updated up to now except for the Patents and Registered Designs Acts which were revised in 1985 (Department of Science and Technology (DST), 2009). These statutes need to be aligned with the current trends in IP including technological advancements. The Malawi Government therefore, has a responsibility of making available essential information to society and more importantly coming up with intellectual property rights regimes which will not restrict but facilitate access to essential information.

2.5.3.1 Copyright laws

WIPO is a UN agency which administers copyright laws at international level. Copyright is granted for the protection of literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works and related rights which are also referred to as neighbouring rights. They are granted to performers, producers of phonograms, and to broadcasting organizations’ (Abdulla, 2008:462). Malawi has legislation protecting copyright which was enacted in 1989. The Copyright Act protects literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works, audio-visual works, sound recordings, broadcasts and the rights of performers. It also establishes the Copyright Association of Malawi (COSOMA) to administer copyright in Malawi. The mission of COSOMA is to promote and protect creative works in which copyright and related rights exist and to ensure that the owners of such works are adequately remunerated for use of their works (COSOMA, 2009:no page). However, the Act does not cover works in the digital environment. It is therefore not responsive to the current trends and requires reviewing.
2.5.3.2 International agreements

International instruments impact on the development of national copyright and neighbouring rights laws. Abdulla (2008:462) in a case study of the UAE on copyright and knowledge advancements observes that national laws on copyright are shaped in line with international agreements on protection of literary and artistic works. National and international copyright frameworks are meant to benefit the users the works without compromising what the owners of works deserve under the copyright law. International instruments are also meant to harmonise national copyright laws among countries in order to standardise and have a common understanding and application of copyright laws. Muir and Oppenheim (2002:468-469) believe harmonised national copyright laws will also promote the attainment of a global market and information society. Malawi is a member of a number of international organisations that deal with IP issues such as World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and UNESCO. Malawi is also a party to a number of agreements and treaties relating to IP which have provisions regarding copyright limitations and exceptions. These include the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the Universal Copyright Convention of 1953 which is administered by UNESCO. At regional level, Malawi is a party to the SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sports which calls on Member States to provide effective copyright and related rights protection and to fight against piracy (DST, 2009).

Malawi has not acceded to some of the treaties such as the Washington Treaty on Intellectual Property in respect of Integrated Circuits and the Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations of
1961, the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) of 1996 (DST, 2009). These treaties have implications on the copyright laws in Malawi because they shape national laws (Abdulla, 2008). By not acceding to these treaties, the copyright laws in Malawi are therefore not responsive to international trends and this affects the free flow and sharing of information.

2.5.3.3 Copyright and digital complexities

Advancements in information technology have brought in new and complex challenges regarding copyright. Information in electronic formats can easily be reproduced as an original copy at no cost, large amounts of information originating from research or academic circles can easily be shared extensively within a short period of time and can easily be stored in a single small space. Researchers have used this technology to share information and facilitate its use (Abdulla, 2008:463). However, the same technology advancements have been used to infringe on copyright laws with ease. Commercial owners of the intellectual content sought measures to protect their works which have ended up restricting legitimate use of these works. Publishers also pushed for laws in a form of copyright, licensing agreements and digital rights management to restrict use of these works (Abdulla, 2008:463). Digital rights management prevents unauthorized access and outlines usage rules for one to access, copy and redistribute. WIPO therefore, enacted two treaties in 1996 under the Berne Convention to address the impact of ICTs on international copyright and neighbouring rights. The treaties were the WIPO Copyright Treaty and the Performances and Phonograms Treaty. The two treaties address copyright protection issues in the digital environment and also legal liability of Internet service providers (Abdulla, 2008:463). As highlighted earlier, Malawi
has not acceded to these treaties and this has implications on the responsiveness of the copyright law in Malawi in the digital environment. If Malawi is to take advantage of the advancements in ICTs to enhance information flow, governments should put in place policy measures to encourage the production and protection of electronic information products. This will require formulating appropriate copyright laws and intellectual property policies.

2.5.3.4 Copyright, education and research community

Copyright has implications on the academic and research activities. The academia and research community are both generators of works as well as users of works created by others which are protected under copyright, in order to generate new knowledge. These works include books, articles, teaching materials and websites. In using these works they employ the principle of fair use in order to avoid infringing on copyright laws (Abdulla, 2008). The academia and researchers benefit a lot from the provisions of copyright law in terms of protection and exceptions. Copyright has also got implications on libraries which have a responsibility of managing intellectual works. The advancements in information technology have brought in new challenges to copyright. However libraries have joined hands with the academicians and researchers to find a balance between the protection of intellectual property and its wide access and use without infringing on copyrights. The exceptions assume that there will be fair use of the works and that sources and name of the author has to be acknowledged. Exceptions are the basis for use of works in teaching, learning, and research without violating copyrights (Abdulla, 2008:462, 469).
2.5.3.5 Mandatory license

Compulsory or mandatory license is a provision that allows use such as copying and translation provided the laid down conditions are fulfilled. These conditions encompass payment of remunerations or loyalties and determining time and place of use. Libraries, archives and documentation centres are permitted under this law to reproduce works for purposes of internal preservation and replacement (Abdulla, 2008:468-469). Users on the other hand, feel that licensing agreements and digital rights management limit access which the academic and research community has always enjoyed under the fair use principle (Abdulla, 2008:463). Academic libraries in Malawi are also of the view that the Copyright Act in Malawi does not accommodate the principle of fair use. This is against the backdrop of COSOMA’s compulsory reproduction licensing agreements entered into with academic institutions. Academic libraries further argue that they have always respected the fair use principle when reproducing works for academic purposes. They now find the Copyright Act restricting access to information with the introduction of licensing agreements by COSOMA (Chiweza et al 2007). Academic libraries under the licensing agreement pay fees for reproduction of works for academic purposes to COSOMA.

2.5.4 Censorship and content regulation

Governments worldwide have put in place mechanisms of dealing with materials which are illegal in print form. Developed countries have gone further to deal with such materials on the Internet through content regulation. Content regulation refers to ‘any type of legislation by government directed at censoring information and communication
on the Internet and controlling or attempting to control access to Internet sites based on subject matter’ (Quimbo, 2003:31). Materials censored include information not suitable or harmful to minors like obscene and racial hatred materials, and political speeches. However, advancements in ICTs have brought in challenges to the application of censorship laws in developing countries (Quimbo, 2003:31). Censorship in these countries has taken the form of government policies on monitoring media content, blocking of websites and intercepting online information where national security is at risk (Karan, 2011:46-47). In some instances as Quimbo (2003:31) notes, government policies have been introduced which cover criminal law penalties (penalties or jail terms) applicable to content providers. Stringent censorship policies are prevalent in China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam. For example, in China public access to Internet is regulated, one has to register or to be licensed by government before being permitted restricted access. Developing countries regulate Internet content particularly on race hatred speeches, offending information or content harmful to minors (Quimbo, 2003:31). The Harvard Law School conducted a study in 2003 which revealed that China had the most extensive Internet censorship in the world. China was denying access to 19,000 websites that government deemed threatening. These included news, religious and political sites as well as other entertainment and educational sites (Quimbo, 2003:34-35). However, countries like Canada, Denmark and Norway do not control content on Internet content. Malawi does not have explicit legislation on regulation of content on the Internet. However, there is legislation covering censorship of print materials. The Malawi Censorship and Control of Entertainment Act no. 11 of 1968 establishes the Malawi Censorship Board as a
regulator to declare whether or not any material is, in its opinion undesirable within the meaning of the Act. The Act in section 23 Article 1 makes it an offence for any person to publish or distribute content which the Board has declared to be undesirable. Materials may be undesirable when considered indecent, obscene, offensive, and harmful to public morals or religious conviction, or public safety. However, the Act does not have explicit provisions of materials in the digital environment. The development of a responsive legal and regulatory framework in the information sector in Malawi is therefore, imperative to address content in the digital as well print environment.

2.5.4 Deposit / Archival regulations

Legal deposit is one mechanism that facilitates access to information. Whalen says:

“Deposit and archival regulations support access to information by ensuring that material not perceived to have market value is retained and made available. A dynamic market does not tend to focus on the retention of documents for use by others, or for the historical and cultural record, so the role of providing storage and preservation must be filled by the public sector. As information is increasingly produced in electronic format, policies need to be developed which guarantee that these records are also stored and preserved for future use” (Whalen, 1994:8).

The legal deposit is meant to promote the collection, preservation and access to published information which has been generated within the country. A legal deposit will spell out the material to deposit and where to deposit it (Publishers Association of South Africa, 2012:online). The National Archives of Malawi administers the Legal Deposit Act (Cap 19.01) of the laws of Malawi. The Act provides for the registration of newspapers, the printing and publication of books and the preservation of printed works published in Malawi. The law requires publishers to deliver a copy of the publication to the Government Archivist at their own expense within two months of publication or face a charge of GBP£20.00 and still deliver the publication in question. However, the role of a
legal deposit in facilitating access to information is less recognised in Malawi. According to a press statement released by the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture (2012) the National Archives of Malawi faces a lot of challenges to have publishers to comply with the provisions of the legal deposit Act. Enakririe and Onyenania (2007:22) note that there is generally low level of awareness on the legal deposit law in Africa. They further observe that libraries have also not been able to live by example in providing access to information they are keeping and information held by publishers through the use of bibliographic control, networking and resource sharing. Uhegbu (2004) adds that most of government agencies do not comply with their obligations as a result of which the legal deposit law is hardly followed and the institutions charged with the responsibility of administering the legal deposit have difficulties in enforcing it. This affects access and utilisation of information. Furthermore, the legal deposit Act in Malawi does not include publications in the digital environment for instance on-line newspapers. As a result it has not been possible for the National Archives to have copies of all publications published in Malawi. Failure of publishers to comply with the legal Deposit Act affects the flow and sharing of information in Malawi.

2.5.5 Library law

National information infrastructures usually have a national library that, among other things, is responsible for collecting, recording, organizing, preserving and making available the nation’s total output of published information. It is actually a repository of national heritage and therefore meant to be established by legislation as set out in IFLA/UNESCO guidelines for legislation for National Library Services (IFLA, 2001:15). Legislation guarantees their existence and recognition within the government structure.
Public library legislation varies from country to country including its provisions. The legislation is sometimes specific to public libraries or it is part of an all-encompassing legislation which includes other types of libraries. Legislation will either simply establish public libraries leaving the issue of standards to a government department or will detail out services to be offered and the standards. Library legislation will also differ from country to country depending on the government structure in a particular country. Nevertheless, IFLA and UNESCO (2001) emphasize that legislation for public libraries should outline the responsible office within government structure that will be responsible for running and financing them. In some countries public libraries are a responsibility of provincial governments, local authorities, or municipalities. However, public libraries are subject to a range of other pieces of legislation for instance, copyright laws, data protection laws, laws regulating the Internet and international agreements. Studies have shown that in Africa most of the public libraries date back to the early missionaries through to colonial period and to post independence period. Most of the public libraries in Africa are facing serious deterioration. They lack current and relevant materials, inadequate finances, do not have adequate infrastructure and lack staff motivation (Aissak, 2000:5-9). Malawi does not have a public library instead functions of the national library are split among different institutions which include the National Library Service, the National Archives of Malawi and the National Documentation Center in the then NRCM (NRCM, 2005). The absence of a national information policy affects implementation of these functions because it is difficult to coordinate and monitor them.
### 2.6 Theoretical framework

As highlighted earlier (Cf 2.1) a theory is ‘an organised body of concepts and principles intended to explain a particular phenomenon’ (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:5). Becker and Bryman (2004:407) define a theory as ‘an integrated set of principles that explains and predicts many but not all observed relationships within a given domain of enquiry’.

The importance of a theoretical framework is that it provides direction to a study, helps in identifying variables to observe, and relationships to look for (Borgatti, 1999:online).

However, information scientists have acknowledged the lack of theoretical frameworks in the area of information policy as a result of which researchers employ frameworks from other disciplines (Rowland, 1996; Browne, 1997). Rowland (1996) is of the opinion that not much has been done to come up with theoretical foundations in the area of information policy. Consequently, there are no standard frameworks, tools and methodologies for use in information policy analysis. Rowland (1996) further concedes that issues relating to information policy have been considered based on the discipline involved. Nevertheless, Trent University (no date:online) thinks that ‘there is no right or wrong theoretical framework to use when examining your topic since every topic can be looked at from a number of different perspectives’.

Some of the theoretical frameworks the researcher felt were relevant to this study included phenomenology, phenomenography and critical realism. However, this study is based on Critical realism which provides causal explanations to the occurrence of events and is used in understanding issues of ontology (theory of being) and epistemology (theory of knowledge). In this study the theoretical framework assisted the
researcher in coming up with the four research questions and objectives as outline in chapter 1 (Cf 1.6 and 1.7). It also assisted in determining methods to use and how to analyse and interpret data. The following sections look at the three theoretical frameworks highlighting their strengths and weaknesses and the choice for critical realism.

2.6.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology originated from the field of philosophy. It was founded by a philosopher called Edmund Husserl in the early 20th Century. It was developed as an empirical method to investigate phenomenon in our livedworld (Larsson and Holmstrom, 2007). However, Phenomenology has been used as both a philosophy and a methodology. Goulding (2005:301) observes that ‘the development of phenomenology has been embroidered with a long controversial and confusing history within the social sciences’. Further notes that it has either been considered as a theoretical framework by those who subscribe to Husserl (1962) thinking or a methodology to those who follow the thinking of Schutz (1967). Husserl came up with a system for explaining and categorizing people’s lived experiences. On the other hand Schutz developed the approach as a method which describes everyday life experiences (Goulding, 2005:301).

2.6.1.1 Characteristics of phenomenology

Research in phenomenology captures people’s lived experiences of a phenomenon (Larsson and Holmstrom, 2007; Goulding, 2005:302). Phenomenology is interested in understanding the meaning that individuals attach to their everyday experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Lester, 1999; Starks and
Trinidad, 2007:1375). The focus is on the phenomenon under study. It aims at understanding what makes the phenomenon to be what it is and without which the phenomenon ceases to be what it is (Larsson and Holmstrom, 2007). Phenomenological approach relies on narratives of the individuals who have encountered the phenomenon under study. Data are therefore collected from the perspective of a participant not the researcher (Lester, 1999). Goulding (2005:302) opines that Phenomenologists rely on views and experiences of the participants as a valid source of data. The views of participants are regarded as facts. Phenomenological approach can be used to study single cases or more. It uses purposive sampling and only targets those that have lived the experience under study. Sampling is determined at the onset of data collection. Data is collected through interviews using open-ended questions, discussions, observations and personal texts (Lester, 1999). Interviews are the main instrument for data collection. Reporting is in a form of comments which are very detailed based on individual experiences. The report presents a summary of findings which are organised according to themes and topics highlighting main issues coming from participants’ discussions. The summary may contain interpretations although it is meant to describe rather than to explain. Direct quotes from participants own words are used to exemplify facts (Lester, 1999).

Phenomenology can be effective at revealing the existence of underlying issues and their effects in individual cases. The process of collecting and analysing data is structured (Goulding, 2005:303). Phenomenological research approach can be used to inform, support or challenge policy and action since it is able to expose issues
surrounding assumptions that are often taken for granted (Lester, 1999; Starks and Trinidad, 2007:1375).

### 2.6.1.2 Limitations of phenomenology

Sample sizes are normally small because it uses purposive sampling as a result it cannot lead to generalisation. Phenomenological approach generates big volumes of data in form of interview notes, tape recordings, and other records. Data analysis is quite demanding and thorough in order to determine categories and themes and identify relationships among them (Lester, 1999).

It is prone to biases because the researcher is the instrument for data collection and analysis. Furthermore participants’ perceptions and interpretations of their experiences of the phenomenon are subjective. However, the researcher’s prior knowledge of the phenomenon therefore is not allowed to influence a phenomenological analysis. This is termed bracketing (Larsson and Holmstrom, 2007).

Sjöström (2002) observes that phenomenology takes a dualistic ontology in which the subject (participant) and the object (phenomenon under study) are considered separately and independently. The two exist separately and independent of each other. They further argue that, phenomenology is interested in a first-order perspective in which the world is described as it is, rather than a second-order perspective in which the world is described as it is understood. Emphasis in phenomenology is on individual lived experiences of the phenomenon as opposed to collective meaning of a phenomenon. The researcher felt that he could not use phenomenology because it only places emphasis on lived experiences and it does not say anything on causal explanations.
which were crucial in accounting for the effects of the absence of a national information policy on information services in Malawi.

2.6.2 Phenomenography

Phenomenographic theoretical framework evolved from the field of education over 30 years ago. It was developed in 1970s by a group of researchers in the Department of Education at the University of Gothenberg in Sweden, who were curious in studying qualitatively the experience of learning. Their research work revealed that students could understand the same material differently and that the differences could be put into distinct categories. The research team then came up with a proposition that if students showed distinct categories of qualitatively different understandings of learning, it was rational to expect the same from people on all kinds of phenomena. Their proposition was later on confirmed by studies carried out by other researchers (Bernard et al 1999:212). Over the years phenomenography has emerged as a significant qualitative approach applied in understanding a broader range of phenomena across different disciplines.

2.6.2.1 Characteristics of phenomenography

Scholars have described Phenomenography as a theoretical framework that aims at “finding out qualitatively the various ways in which people experience, conceptualize, realize and understand varied aspects of phenomena in the world around them. The intention of phenomenography is...to find...a collective meaning of the phenomenon” (Ornek, 2008: online).
In phenomenography, there is an inseparable relationship between the phenomenon under study and the participant. The phenomenon does not exist by itself. It always has a meaning to someone and will not exist independent of the participant. Phenomenography is about studying the way people experience a phenomenon and not to study a particular phenomenon (Ornek, 2008:online). It answers the how and what questions (Taina and Tarja, 2012).

Phenomenographers acknowledge that people experience or understand a phenomenon in different ways because of varying experiences in a particular phenomenon. However, phenomenographers are interested in establishing the different ways in which people conceive and experience a particular phenomenon. It focuses on common views held by groups of people and not the opinion of individual participants. It gathers evidence to illustrate the range of views present within the population under study. The focus of the research is therefore not on what the researcher thinks about the phenomenon but what respondents think of the phenomenon (Ornek, 2008:online; Harris, 2008:61).

Phenomenography uses individual semi-structured interviews for data collection. The interview is meant to allow the respondents think about the experiences and recount them to the interviewer so that in the end they both have a common understanding about the meanings of the experiences (Ornek, 2008:online; Bernard et al 1999:222). According to Sjöström & Dahlgren (2002) interviews focus on the understanding of the participants and are meant to reveal the beliefs, values, reality, feelings and experience participants have on a given phenomenon. The researcher is required to be neutral to avoid influencing the ideas of participants because the researcher is not studying his or
her own understanding and experience but that of the participants. Phenomenographers have termed this approach as bracketing. The researcher also approaches data analysis without any preconceived ideas (Barnard et al. 1999:online).

The sample in phenomenographic studies is usually based on a particular group of people and the relationship they have to a phenomenon under study. (Bernard et al., 1999:215). The sample captures a broad range of relevant population characteristics like background, prior experience, gender, and age. These characteristics are representative of the group under investigation (Stamouli and Huggard, 2007:184).

Data analysis involves identifying qualitatively groups of categories that describe experiences of different people on a particular phenomenon. Phenomenographers believe that a controlled number of categories are possible for each issue under study. These categories come from the interview transcriptions. The categories of description constitute the outcome of the research. The results are presented as a narrative of the experience of a phenomenon without altering the meaning of the research data. Phenomenography therefore presents the results in the language and meaning of the participants (Ornek, 2008; Bernard et al. 1999).

2.6.2.2 Limitations of phenomenography

Researchers have observed that although the tendency is to associate the conceptions of respondents and what they say about the phenomenon, there are instances where participant’s experience with a given phenomenon may not correspond with how a participant narrates his/her experience with the phenomenon. Participants will either emphasize one part or all aspects of a conception. As a result, a researcher does not
always obtain all what participants understand or experiences on a particular phenomenon from the interview (Bernard et al 1999: 216).

Scholars have also noted that it is not possible for researchers using phenomenographic approach to assume that they can entirely be unbiased while analyzing research data. They observe that an inherent relationship exists between the researcher and the phenomenon under study because a researcher first has to have a good understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon being analysed. It is only rational to think that the researchers’ experiences and prior knowledge on the phenomenon will influence their data analysis and categorization (Webbs, 1997; Stamouli and Huggard, 2007).

It is difficult to ascertain reliability and repeatability of phenomenographic studies. Researchers like Marton (1986) as cited in Orgill (no date:par 23) admit that it is possible that two different researchers working individually would arrive at different categories of views of participants using the same data. However, once the categories have been determined, they need to be put in such a way that every researcher will be able to understand and use them.

The researcher could not employ phenomenography because it basically describes variations of perceptions and experiences of people about the phenomenon and is silent on causal explanations which were crucial in understanding and interpreting the effects of the absence of a national information policy on information services in Malawi.
2.6.3 Critical Realism

This study is anchored on critical realism, a theoretical framework developed by Roy Bhaskar in 1978. Critical realism is a paradigm that is used in understanding issues of ontology (theory of being) and epistemology (theory of knowledge) (McEvoy and Richards, 2003; Easton, 2010). The philosophical stand taken by critical realists is that there is reality (the world) out there independent of observers and that it is difficult to apprehend. Critical realists believe that there is need to define ontology first in order to understand epistemology. The argument advanced is that the world exists independent of the knowledge we have about it. Our knowledge about reality is fallible because the thinking we have about reality is at times correct and sometimes incorrect (Easton, 2010:119; McEvoy and Richards, 2003; Sobh and Perry, 2006; Marobela, 2006).

Over the years critical realism has emerged as a significant quantitative as well as qualitative research method applied in understanding a broader range of phenomena across different disciplines. Critical realism has been used for example in economics (Hodgson, 2004; Bisman, 2010), industrial marketing (Easton, 2010), nursing (McEvoy and Richards, 2003), and management (Marobela, 2006).

It has also been successfully applied in policy studies. For instance, Owen et al (2012) used the framework in a study that examined the way information policy is developed in the UK and the part information experts play in policy formulation. The study aimed at investigating the coordination and implementation of information policy across the UK government structure. The study particularly focused on policy relating to citizen's access to public sector information. The study was conducted in London. It employed document analysis and semi-structured interviews to collect data from 25 key
stakeholders. The study used interviews in order to understand individual views on how information policy is formulated and publicized. The study targeted five categories of respondents in most senior positions which included top civil servants directly dealing with policies, regulators and advisors on the relevant policies, academics and senior professionals in the field of information, analysts and campaigners. The study employed face to face interviews. It used purposive sampling to recruit participants. The study found that UK does not have a single overarching national information policy but a series of information policies addressing a diversity of information issues. The study further found that the responsibility of information policy making is spread over nine government departments dealing with 18 different information policy issues. Coordination of information policy development was also a challenge because of the silo type of thinking in government departments. Information professionals have not drawn the attention of government to the value and benefits of information to government itself and the society. In addition, the information professionals have not exerted much influence on policy making (Owen et al 2012).

Atkinson and Lucas (2012) also used the theoretical framework to examine the way in which gender interacted with policy in adult social care work. The objectives of the study were to investigate definitions of care and their implications for the status of care work; conceptions of the skills required in care work; and perceptions of pay using this as a proxy for job quality. The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data and interviewed 76 respondents comprising managers and care workers in care providers across England. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo software to generate themes. The study used retroduction in order to provide
a deeper explanation of the phenomenon. The study found that policy has limited influence on the linking of skills to increased pay. Care workers perspectives are substantially informed by gender. Care work is depicted as a women’s work that is nevertheless worthy of respect, challenging and complex resisting traditional categorization which render skills invisible and their work low in status (2012:17).

2.6.3.1 Characteristics of critical realism

Critical realists use entities as opposed to variables which are commonly used in social sciences when investigating phenomenon (Easton, 2010:120). Entities (objects) are therefore used to characterize the phenomenon under study. Easton (2010:120) explains that entities are considered to be the ‘basic theoretical building blocks for explanation…entities could be organisations, people, relationships, management information systems, attitudes, resources, inventions, or ideas’.

Critical realists believe that the entities we study have the ability to influence events and are also liable to the influence of other entities. However, in some instances the power may exist but may remain latent until prompted by the prevailing conditions (Easton 2010:120; Marobela, 2006).

According to Easton (2010:120) the interest in critical realism is to investigate events that are also referred to as outcomes. These are things or behaviour that we are able to observe from the outside when they occur. However, critical realists acknowledge that we cannot directly observe all events therefore some are reported as is the case with most social science research. As a result explanations are essentially interpretive in nature (Easton, 2010:124). Critical realists also believe that we can only understand the
social world through what goes on in society and not merely studying individuals in a discrete manner (Easton, 2010:121). Critical realism therefore provides a wider view of investigating social phenomenon because it looks at reality in totality not in discrete terms (Marobela, 2006).

Critical realism aims at providing an explanation to what caused an event to take place. Easton (2010:121) opines that it is meant to provide a response to the question “what caused those events to happen?” Causal mechanisms are a key concept in critical realism. Other critical realists refer to these mechanisms as deep structures, deep processes or generative mechanisms (Easton, 2010:122). According to Marobela (2006) the concept explores the underlying cause of observed events to explain their emergence. Easton (2010:122) explains that generative mechanisms are means through which entities using their power and liabilities cause particular events to occur. McEvoy and Richards (2003:412) write that generative mechanisms are structures, powers, and relationships that lead to the occurrence of events. Mechanisms however cannot be directly observed but through their effects (McEvoy and Richards, 2003:412). An example of a widely recognised generative mechanism in natural sciences is ‘natural selection’ and in social sciences is ‘defence mechanism’ (McEvoy and Richards, 2003:412). Causal mechanisms have proved to be very useful in explaining underlying issues which are difficult to comprehend and which conventional research has often taken for granted or overlooked (McEvoy and Richards, 2003; Easton, 2010; Marobela 2006).

Critical realists observe that existing conditions determine the type of event a mechanism will generate. The same mechanism may generate different events
depending on the prevailing conditions. It is also true that the same type of event may be influenced by different causes. Critical realists opine that mechanisms provide explanations to particular events (Easton, 2010:122). Critical realists therefore do not believe in associating the same cause to the same occurrence of an event as a way of understanding reality. They believe that social worlds are open systems consequently things do not always work the same way. Conditions vary and so do events. This is contrary to the stand of positivism which looks at cause and effect and regularity in order to make predictions (Marobela, 2006).

Critical realists always believe in having divergent explanations of what the data mean in order to build up a good interpretation of the event (Easton, 2010:122). Marobela (2006:no page) points out that we can learn a lot from irregularities as well as regularities.

Critical realists view reality as being made up of three distinct strata which include the empirical domain where observations are made and experienced; the actual domain where events happen; and the real domain where mechanisms work and cause events to occur. Stratification of the ontology helps to relate phenomenon under study with the social context (Easton, 2010; Marobela, 2006).

Critical realism uses a wide range of research methods to explore social phenomenon. They can either be quantitative or qualitative methods. The preference of the method depends on the nature of the phenomenon under study and what one wants to know about the phenomenon (Easton, 2010:123). However, Sobh and Perry (2005) argue that critical realism research is interested in generative mechanisms in order to provide
causal explanations hence the data produced are about meanings and qualitative in nature. Quantitative findings are therefore unlikely to yield the understanding of causal mechanisms consequently critical realism is mostly applied in qualitative studies. Some of the methods that critical realists have used in qualitative research include case studies; ethnography, participant observations, semi-structured and unstructured depth interviews (Bisman, 2010; Easton, 2010; McEvoy and Richards, 2003; Sobh and Perry, 2005). Data are collected either directly from people, past documents or objects (Easton, 2010:123-124).

Retroduction is the key epistemological process that critical realists employ in order to explain why events occur. According to Easton (2010:123) retroduction is a type of reasoning in which ‘events are explained by postulating and identifying mechanisms which are capable of producing them.’ McEvoy and Richards (2003:414) note that the method is common in detective work where it is used to infer the most likely suspect to have committed the crime by simply analysing the characteristics of the crime. Medical practitioners also use retroduction to diagnose sicknesses through the use of symptoms that come with particular illnesses. McEvoy and Richards (2003:414) explains that retroduction can also be used alongside deduction and induction in order to evaluate divergent explanations on the basis of their explanatory power.

Results may be presented as numerical frequencies. The frequencies are only meant to assist in interpreting results. A reader is therefore able to follow the interpretation of the findings by referring to the numerical frequencies. Causal explanations are provided for all observations made and direct quotations are used to support explanations. This is meant to provide an in-depth understanding (Sobh and Perry, 2005).
2.6.3.2 Limitations of critical realism

Scholars have noted that critical realism recognises that observations are biased because they are influenced by prior knowledge scientists have before conducting research (McEvoy and Richards, 2003; Sobh and Perry, 2005). It is therefore not possible to have a complete description and understanding of any social phenomenon (Easton, 2010).

It has also been observed that critical realism does not fully take into account the historical development of phenomenon as a result it becomes difficult to understand the root and nature of events and mechanisms if there is no theory of contradiction (Bisman, 2010; Marobela, 2006).

Critical realists believe that the social world is an open system as a result they do not recognise the existence of law-like regularities in the social sciences. They believe that things do not always work the same way (Easton, 2010; Marobela, 2006). However, critics like Jefferies (2011:5) thinks that law-like regularities exist in social sciences. He takes the case of a landlord and a tenant relationship as a good example where one does not exists without the other and that the existence of one necessarily presupposes the other.

Critics have also noted that the use of causal mechanism to explain events is often unclear. There are instances where causal mechanisms may seem to be latent as critical realist would assume while in actual sense they are in operation and can empirically be established (Jefferies, 2011).

94
Some researchers have also observed that critical realism is only good at providing explanation and not predicting future trends (Brigham Young University, 2011:online). However, reacting to this, supporters of critical realism observe that if reality was predictable science would have had little or no significance at all (Marobela, 2006).

2.6.3.3 Rationale for using critical realism

This study adopted Critical realism despite the limitations and criticisms advanced by critics. Critical realism enabled the researcher to delve beyond experiences and observations to provide causal explanations and account for the effects of the absence of the overall national information policy on information services in Malawi which were key to answering the four research questions this study posed.

Through critical realism the researcher was able to identify entities to investigate in the study which characterised the national information policy. The entities were access to information services, capacity building in information services, the legal and regulatory framework for information services and impediments to the development of a national information policy. These entities formed the ‘theoretical building blocks’ for explanation for a national information policy and the effects of its absence on information services in Malawi.

The theoretical framework further enabled the researcher to identify and understand generative mechanisms (processes) in order to explain the occurrence of events in this case ‘effects’. It would have been difficult to account for the effects of the absence of a national information policy on information services without transcending the experiences of participants and researcher’s observations into understanding the generative
mechanisms and using retrodiction to interpret data. Generative mechanisms as put by McEvoy and Richards (2003:412) are real although they cannot be observed directly but can be explained through their effects. Some of the causal mechanisms the researcher observed included global information networks, local information networks comprising libraries and ICTs; legal and regulatory framework which included policies and legislation; international agreements; the research and development system; government system, international trends; and the education and training system. The generative mechanisms also enabled the researcher to determine the causal explanations on why Malawi does not have an overarching national information policy up to now. As Marobela argues (2006) a researcher can only understand phenomena better when he goes beyond the experience to describe the presence of entities we can’t observe.

The theoretical framework recognises that language is the vehicle for conveying meaning. The researcher therefore used interviews to get participant’s understandings of the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. The use of critical realism also allowed participants to recount their own perceptions and experiences in their own words, and during data analysis process the researcher was able to determine divergent understanding participants had about the effects of the absence of such a policy on information services. Events (outcomes) were largely reported by respondents who had encountered the phenomenon and in some instances were directly observed by the researcher. For instance the researcher carried out some observations on the availability and use of ICTs in six libraries. The theoretical framework helped the
researcher to relate the phenomenon with the social context. He was therefore able to
draw respondents from different strata of society in order to have a better understanding
of the effects of the absence of a national information policy on information services.
This also presented the researcher with divergent views which helped him build up
better explanations of the outcomes of the study (Easton, 2010).

2.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has reviewed literature relating to free access to information; impediments
to the development of an overarching national information policy; capacity building in
terms of education and training, and infrastructure; and the legal and regulatory
framework in information services. In addition the chapter has discussed three
theoretical frameworks (phenomenology, phenomenography and critical realism) which
the researcher felt were relevant to the study highlighting their characteristics, strengths
and weaknesses and the choice of critical realism on which the study is based. The next
chapter looks at research design and methodology.
Chapter 3

Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

The study was aimed at exploring the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. This chapter highlights the research design and the methodology the researcher employed in the study in order to achieve the objectives and answer the research questions stated in chapter one.

3.2 Description of the study area

Malawi is a landlocked country which shares a border with Mozambique to the East, South and Southwest; Zambia to the West and; Tanzania to the North and Northeast. It occupies an area of 111,434 square kilometers with 94,276 square kilometers being land and the rest is a lake. Malawi is divided into three administrative regions namely Northern region, Central region and Southern region. The country has a total of 28 districts. Lilongwe is the capital city and where most government departments are headquartered. Malawi was a British protectorate until 1964 when it gained independence. It was a one-party state until 1994 when it adopted a multiparty political system. UNDP (2011) in its Human Development Report of 2011 indicates that the country has an estimated population of 15.4 million with 80% living in rural the areas. It is one of the poorest countries in the world ranked number 171 against 187 with 52.4% of the people living below the national poverty line. A national poverty line as defined by the Malawi National Statistics Office (2009:84) is a minimum required to subsist expressed in Malawian Kwacha based on the cost-of-basic-needs. Countries, through
their competent national authorities determine national poverty lines which UNDP adopts (UNDP, 2011). Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of Malawi (NSO, 2008).

The study was conducted from 28 June to 30 August 2011 in the major cities of Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu, where most of the targeted research participants were found. The City of Lilongwe happens to be the duty station of the researcher. Figure 3.1 below shows cities and towns in Malawi and where the study was conducted. The targeted research participants were those that the researcher felt had the required information and were willing to share it (Cf 3.3.4 and 3.3.5)
3.3 Research design

Researchers regard a research design as an execution plan of a study. It is a step by step arrangement of an investigation which enables a researcher to answer research
question(s) and achieve the research objectives using the data collected. It also ensures that the study is accomplished with the resources available (Robson, 2002; Durrheim, 2006). A research design is also meant to reduce the probability of coming up with inaccurate conclusions from the data (Durrheim, 2006:34-35). Stangor (2011:13) defines a research design as a specific method a researcher uses to collect, analyse, and interpret data. He further says that there are many types of research designs. The choice of a research design is based on its ability to answer the research questions of the study. Becker and Bryan (2004:186) add that an important principle to appreciate is that there is no universally superior research design. A research design is only good as its suitability to the research questions being asked. Some of the research designs that Stangor (2004) mentions which are used in human behaviour research include descriptive research design, correlation research design and experimental research design.

Descriptive research design is meant to answer questions about the current state of affairs. It provides a picture of thoughts, feelings and behaviour of individuals. It can be employed in qualitative or quantitative research (Stangor, 2011; Robson, 2002). The advantage of this design is that it provides a detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study as it currently exists. However, it does not assess relationships among variables (Stangor, 2007:16, 128).

Correlational research design is meant to assess relationships between and among two or more variables. The advantage is that it is able to show relationships between and among variables and make predictions about future trends. The disadvantage of this
design is that it does not explain reasons for the existence of relationships among the variables (Stangor, 2004:18).

Experimental research design is aimed at assessing the impact of one variable on the other through experimental manipulations on a dependent variable. The advantage of this type of design is that it explains why variables are related. However it cannot be used in studies where the researcher can’t manipulate important variables like in studies looking at social phenomenon (Stangor, 2007:19).

This study adopted the descriptive research design in order to understand in detail the current state of affairs regarding information services in Malawi in the absence of a national information policy. It provided the researcher with a clear and detailed picture through views, feelings and experiences of participants regarding factors impeding the development of an overall national information policy in Malawi, the state of access to information services, capacity building and the legal and regulatory framework relating to information services in Malawi.

### 3.3.1 Research method

According to Becker and Bryman (2004:186) a research method is a ‘technique for gathering data and uses instruments such as a questionnaire, interview and observation and can be used with any research design’. A research method can either be quantitative or qualitative. The differences between the two lie in the nature of the data collected and method of analysis (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011). Durrheim (2006) further observes that each method has its own strengths and weaknesses and should be seen as an option not competing with the other. The choice between the two
methods would depend on the aim of the study and the type of data required to realise the aim of the study.

3.3.1.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is interested in quantities of variables of phenomenon under study. Quantitative researchers seek to prove hypotheses about a phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:95). Leedy and Ormrod (2010:95) observe that the aim in quantitative studies is to establish relationships between variables and to develop generalisation that contribute to existing theories. Quantitative researchers often start with a specific hypothesis which they would want to test. Quantitative researchers use commonly accepted measures to come up with quantities of variables they want to study and will only collect data relevant to those variables. Samples in quantitative studies are usually large and are drawn using a probability sampling approach. This approach allows a quantitative researcher to come up with a representative sample than can be used to generalise their conclusions (Becker and Bryman, 2004; Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011; Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). They employ standardised procedures to collect data and use statistical procedures such as graphs and tables to analyse data and draw conclusions from the data (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010; Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011). Data are generated in numeric form (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011:183).

The research method offers a number of advantages. It follows structured guidelines for conducting quantitative studies, consequently the study design remains fixed throughout. This makes it possible for a study to be reproducible (Becker and Bryman, 2004). There is more objectivity in measuring variables of interest in quantitative research. Researchers tend to remain detached from research participants in order to
draw unbiased conclusions (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:94-95). Quantitative research enables a researcher to generalise research findings beyond the confines of the research context (Becker and Bryman, 2004:90).

However the method has some weaknesses. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011:16) observe that quantitative studies are able to reveal the relationship that exists between two variables but do not contribute much to our understanding of what is responsible for the relationship as qualitative research methods do. Furthermore, there is little room for flexibility in quantitative studies because of the prescribed procedures researchers have to follow.

3.3.1.2 Qualitative research

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) as cited in Stangor (2011:15) observe that qualitative research is about observing and describing events as they occur. The intention is to understand phenomenon in greater detail as it occurs in the natural set up. Durrheim (2006:47) describes qualitative research as research that allows a researcher to investigate a phenomenon of interest in greater detail, and to be able to understand and relate the meaning being derived from data. Qualitative research allows a researcher to investigate an incident as it occurs in its natural setting without any interference. Qualitative research allows a researcher to engage and interact with participants in order to examine and understand a situation (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:95).

Qualitative research uses inductive approach to understand a phenomenon. It starts with general research questions instead of specific hypotheses as the case is with quantitative research and collects an extensive amount of textual data (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:95). The development of theory is based on the data collected (Becker
and Bryman, 2004; Leedy and Ormrod, 2010; Durrheim, 2006). This allows interpretation to take place in respondents’ own words. The ensuing theory helps to explain the phenomenon under study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:95). As opposed to quantitative research, qualitative research targets a small sample size comprising participants who have encountered the phenomenon under study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

Qualitative research offers a number of advantages. It is unstructured and this offers flexibility to the researcher to probe respondents when a new and interesting issue comes up (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:95). Participants are able to respond in their own words because of the open-ended questions a qualitative researcher employs unlike in quantitative methods where respondents have to choose from a set of responses (Mack et al. 2005:4). Furthermore, open-ended questions are can be used to induce responses that are detailed, pertinent and enlightening that a researcher may not have expected. Qualitative research allows for a good level of rapport and interactions between the researcher and participant so that the researcher is able to get more from the participant (Mack et al. 2005:4). Qualitative research is also ideal for answering ‘what’ questions and seeks to describe what is going on (Robson, 2002).

However, qualitative research has a number of weaknesses. Durrheim (2006:47) observes that qualitative research is time consuming and is prone to researcher bias. It is more subjective because it does not employ statistical analysis and may not fully maintain the neutrality of the researcher from the research process (Stangor, 2011; Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). It involves more intensive, time consuming data collection and analysis. It involves a small number of respondents or cases which are not
randomly selected as a result one cannot generalise as the case is with large random samples of quantitative research (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011).

Despite its weaknesses the researcher adopted qualitative research in order to understand in greater detail the possible underlying factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy and the effects of the absence of such a policy on information services in Malawi which were largely not known. This would not have been possible with quantitative research methods which do not offer explanations for relationships between variables. The researcher had to engage and interact closely with respondents who had some experience and knowledge on national information policy and information services in Malawi. The interactions enabled the researcher to get their views, feelings and perceptions. The researcher engaged respondents through interviews and observations in order to investigate and understand the current state of information services in Malawi (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:95). Qualitative research also offered the researcher flexibility to probe respondents where things were not clear or where he wanted to learn more details which would not have been possible with quantitative research methods (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:95). Furthermore the study targeted a small sample size of 12 respondents for each of the eight homogenous categories of respondents (Cf 3.3.6) which meant that statistical techniques would have offered little advantage because of the few cases involved (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011).

3.3.1.2.1 Types of qualitative research designs

Some of the commonly used qualitative research designs are case study, ethnography, phenomenological, grounded theory, content analysis (Leady and Ormrod, 2010:45)
and exploratory research design (Robson, 2002). However, Leady and Ormrod (2010:45) further explain that these designs are not stand-alone. A study may include elements of two or more qualitative designs. Qualitative research by its nature is flexible and open-ended and it evolves over the course of a study.

**Case study research design**

A case study research design may be used when a researcher wants to understand a situation little is known about or which is not well understood. A case could be an individual, location, a family, a programme, an event or organisation (Bryman, 2004:48-52). A case study research design may focus in more depth on a single case or more over a period of time. Case studies may dwell on a single case because it is unique and researchers want to employ the understanding gained from the unique case to similar cases elsewhere. Case studies may also involve two or more cases to enable researchers make comparisons, build theory or draw generalisable conclusions (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:137).

Case study research designs involve extensive data collection and data include observations, interviews, documents, past records, and audio-visual materials. Data are often collected over long periods of time and the researcher maintains constant contact with the people or phenomenon being studied (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:137).

Leady and Ormrod (2010:137) point out that the problem with case study research design particularly in single cases is that a researcher cannot be sure that the findings are generalisable until supported by other case studies or experimental studies. However, Stangor (2011:33) argues that case studies in such instances may provide
insights for future more controlled research. In addition it is difficult to establish the cause and effect relationship in case study research design. It is prone to researcher biases because of the intense involvement in the study. If the case under study is unique then the results may only be applicable to that particular case (University of Southern Carolina, 2012:online)

**Ethnographic research design**

An ethnographic research design requires a researcher to investigate in detail a group that has a similar culture. The researcher spends a lengthy time studying the group in its natural setting. The period of study may vary from several months to years. The researcher is mainly interested in observing the everyday life of the people in the group so that he/she establishes the traditions, beliefs, the community setup and other cultural issues (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) opine that the design is flexible in terms of the choice of method for collecting data. However, they observe that this works better for an experienced researcher who knows what he is looking for but may pose problems to an upcoming researcher who may end up being preoccupied with worthless trivia. Data collection involves participant observations, interviews and the researcher takes extensive notes and may also collect some artifacts. Researchers use participants’ own words to recount life within the group under study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

One of the disadvantages of ethnographic research design is that it requires prolonged interactions with the group under study in its natural setting. On the other hand, this gives time to the researcher to learn more about the group, an opportunity which may
not be available with other designs. The other problem with ethnographic research design is that it requires a good understanding of cultural anthropology to get the best out of it (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Furthermore, the researcher may emotionally become involved with participants with the prolonged interactions and may lose the ability to assess the situation accurately. It then becomes difficult to analyse data collected with total objectivity. In addition, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) observe that the design requires considerable patience and tolerance to observe and interact with people in the group and remain objective.

**Phenomenological research design**

As highlighted earlier (cf 2.3.3) phenomenology is regarded as a theoretical framework as well as a research design (Hancock, 1998; Goulding, 2005). Goulding (2005) explains that those who agree to the philosophical thinking of Husserl (1962) and Heidegger (1962) take it as a theoretical framework and those who accept the stand of Schutz (1967) consider it as a methodology. Phenomenology means the study of phenomenon where phenomenon may be an event, a situation, experience or a concept. It is used to describe phenomenon in the world we live (Hancock, 1998:4). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) phenomenology as a research design attempts to get the viewpoint and understanding people have about a phenomenon. It is aimed at finding out what it is like to experience a given phenomenon. Phenomenology study design allows a researcher to make some general conclusions on a phenomenon based on the experiences of those who have had a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon.
The design relies on interviews which are often long. A researcher employs a carefully selected sample size of 5 to 25 participants comprising individuals who have directly encountered the phenomenon being studied. Interviews are unstructured and a researcher engages a participant in a conversation in order to arrive at a common understanding of the phenomenon. Data from the interviews are analysed to identify common themes emerging from people’s descriptions and experiences (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

However, the problem with the design is that it becomes difficult to maintain objectivity especially if a researcher also happens to have encountered the phenomenon being studied (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:141).

**Grounded theory research design**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) the purpose of grounded theory research design is to develop theory from data that have been collected in the field. It follows a predetermined set of procedures for analysing data and developing a theoretical model. The development of theory is therefore, driven by data collected.

The research design is ideal in instances where inadequacies have been identified in current theories on a phenomenon or where they are yet to be developed. Interviews play a major role in data collection besides observations, documents, historical records, and video-tapes. Data collected is in form of views and narratives of people being studied (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Data analysis is done concurrently with data collection. Analysis starts immediately a researcher starts collecting data by developing
categories to classify the data. Data that are collected afterwards are aimed at saturating the established categories (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

However, Leady and Ormrod (2010:45) observe that the steps a researcher has to follow in grounded theory are quite ordered and end up restricting the researcher’s flexibility and may influence the researcher to come up with categories prematurely.

**Content analysis research design**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:144) content analysis is a ‘detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular collection of material in order to identifying patterns, themes and biases’. Content analyses have been applied in a wide range of disciplines to examine books, newspapers, films, TV, art, music, video tapes of human interactions, transcripts of conversations and Internet blog. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:144) point out that content analysis is not essentially an independent design it might be integrated into other research designs.

However, the major disadvantage of content analysis is that it requires a great deal of planning before starting the research project more than the other research designs (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:144).

**Exploratory research design**

According to Robson (2002:59) ‘exploratory research is quite useful when you want to find out what is happening, particularly in little understood situations, or to seek new insights, ask questions, assess a phenomenon in a new light and to generate new ideas and hypotheses for further research’. A researcher may therefore, want to undertake an exploratory study to gather enough information that would enable one to devise and
implement another study which is broader and more methodical in nature. Neuman (2006:33-34) observes data collection is most of the times done using qualitative techniques and is not tied to a particular theory or research question. The design allows a researcher to get preliminary information on the phenomenon under study. In addition, it is flexible and can provide answers to a variety of research questions like what, why, how questions. The design can assist a researcher in coming up with research priorities, formal hypotheses and comprehensive research problems. It also provides for definition of new concepts and expound on concepts in use (University of Southern California:online).

However, this type of research does not lead to generalization. Results may not be used for decision making because they are not conclusive. There are no standard data gathering and analysis methods employed (University of Southern California:online).

The study adopted an exploratory research design despite its weaknesses. An exploratory research design in this study was significant in bringing a detailed understanding of the factors that are impeding the development of an overarching national information policy and the effects of the absence of such a policy on information services in Malawi which were largely not known. It was also ideal for answering the four research questions since it addresses the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions. The researcher was able to gather information through in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis (Bryman, 2004) in line with the four research questions and objectives.
3.3.2 Study population

A study population refers to the larger group from which a smaller representative group known as a sample of the study population is drawn (Babbie, 2007:190; Powell, 1997:58). The study population has at least one common attribute allowing a researcher to generalize on the basis of a representative sample of observations (Knocke and Bohrnstedt, 1991:12). The study population for this research consisted of policy makers in government, Members of Parliamentary committees on legal and media issues, information scientists, information service providers, researchers, academicians, legal experts and information users in Malawi. The groups of respondents were determined based on the structure of the national information system in Malawi (Cf 1.4) and the role a particular group of respondents play in information policy development.

3.3.3 Sampling procedure

Sampling is the process of selecting cases to be observed from a study population (Babbie, 2007:180). Sampling is often used in circumstances where it is not feasible or convenient to study the whole of a population due to time or resources. The researcher collects data only from a small portion of a population of interest but draws conclusions about the larger group where the sample group came from (Robson, 2002:260; Knocke and Bohrnstedt, 1991:12; McClendon, 2004:5). The choice of a sampling procedure depends on the research goal and how the researcher wants to generalize the findings to a wider population and the confidence with which to do that (Bloch, 2004:173). Robson (2002:261) explains that sampling procedures are usually categorized into probability and non-probability samples.
According to Stangor (2010) probability sampling aims at drawing a representative sample from the population so that the results of studying the sample can be generalized back to the population. In probability sampling the nature of the population of interest is defined and the likelihood of each research participant being selected is known. Probability sampling allows statistical conclusions to be made from the findings of the sample hence sometimes referred to as representative sampling. Drawing a probability sample requires that the researcher first obtains a complete sample frame for all the people in the population of interest (Stangor, 2011). In this way, a researcher avoids selection biases and the sample becomes representative of the population (McClendon, 2004).

Stangor (2011:110-114) argues that in cases where probability sampling is impossible because there is no available sampling frame, non-probability samples must be used. However, in non-probability sampling as Robson (2002) states ‘you can’t make such statistical inferences but it is possible to say something sensible about the population from non-probability samples but not on the same kind of statistical grounds as the probability sampling’. In non-probability sampling the likelihood of each research participant being selected is not known. Leedy and Ormrod (2004:211) agree that in non-probability sampling some members of the population have little or no chance of being sampled. This means that the sample may not be representative. Since this study did not have a sampling frame of the population of interest, it adopted a non-probability sampling approach (Stangor, 2011). Some of the non-probability sampling methods Stangor (2011) suggests that a qualitative researcher can use when a population of interest is rare or difficult to reach include:
3.3.3.1 Convenience sampling

The researcher recruits as a participant anybody who is readily available and in the end the sample is not representative of the population. Researchers find convenience sampling to be the least costly when they consider time, effort and money. However, researchers have also observed that such a sample may not be used to draw inferences about the population (Stangor, 2011:113-114; Remler and Ryzin, 2011:141; Marshall, 1996). Furthermore convenience sampling has problems of bias in coverage because people who may be available to a researcher may not represent much of the population of interest (Remler and Ryzin, 2011:154).

3.3.3.2 Snowball sampling or chain sampling

Mack et al (2005:5) observes that researchers regard snowball sampling as a form of purposive sampling. Qualitative researchers often employ snowball sampling for populations which are difficult to access through other sampling strategies. In snowball sampling respondents are asked to refer people they know through their social networks to the researcher for inclusion in the sample (Remler and Ryzin, 2011; Mack et al 2005; Stangor, 2011; Hardon et al 2004). The disadvantage of snowball sampling is that there is high potential for sampling bias and the people in the sample may be different from the people in the population of interest (Stangor, 2011:110-114; Hardon et al 2004).

3.3.3.3 Quota sampling

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:212) quota sampling is another form of convenience sampling. It allows a researcher (during the designing of the study) to determine the number of people with the required characteristics to be included as
participants in equal proportions as they exist in the population of interest. The researcher therefore collects data from people who are likely to have the required information about the phenomenon under study from the population of interest until the intended numbers are reached (Mack et al 2005:5). The problem with quota sampling is that it pays more attention to the intended numbers of participants than the representativeness of the sample (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010; Mack et al 2005).

3.3.3.4 Purposive sampling

Mack et al (2005:5) observe that purposive sampling targets participants who meet the required criteria relevant to a particular phenomenon under study. A researcher using purposive sampling is able to determine sample sizes on the basis of theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is when additional data during data collection don’t bring new information on the phenomenon under study (Mack et al 2005:5). Purposive sampling accords a researcher an opportunity to target those that he/she feels are likely to have the required information and are willing to share it. However, there is no assurance that a purposive sample is representative of the total population (Mack et al 2005:5).

The study used purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling design to determine research participants. In this study purposive sampling, accorded the researcher an opportunity to target from the population of interest those that he felt had the knowledge and experience in national information policy as well as information services, were available and ready to share the information. This would have been problematic with convenience and snowball sampling because they have high potential
of attracting participant outside the population of interest. Furthermore, the study could not use quota sampling because the targeted number of respondents was more of a guide to theoretical saturation than a requirement as it is the case with quota sampling.

### 3.3.4 Sample size

A sample size according to Robson (2002:260) is a selection of cases to be studied from the population. A number of researchers have conceded that pre-determination of sample size in qualitative research is not easy. The basic principle in qualitative research is that you keep on collecting data from respondents until you reach saturation, a point where no new information or themes are observed in the data (Robson, 2002; Powell, 1997). Morse (2000) as cited in Robson (2002:199) suggests that saturation will depend on the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, quality of data, study design and research method. Nevertheless, these factors are still not enough to enable a researcher predict the exact sample size but will be able to provide the basis of the estimated number of participants chosen (Robson, 2002:199). Betrand and Hughes (2005:143) opine that, ‘there are no rules on the size of the sample, in some cases a large sample will be wise and in others a single case is sufficient and illuminating’. Guest et al (2006:610) after reviewing numerous literatures only found seven studies which provided guidelines on sample sizes in qualitative research although there were variations amongst them and none except for two provided evidence for the recommendations made. He noted that there were two sample size recommendations for grounded theory studies of 20 – 30 (Creswell, 1998) and 30 – 50 participants (Morse, 1994). For ethnographic studies there were recommendations of sample sizes of 30 – 50 (Morse, 1994) and 30 – 60 participants (Bernard, 2000). For
phenomenological studies two recommendations of at least six participants (Morse 1994) and 5-25 participants (Creswell, 1998); for qualitative ethology there was a recommendation of 100-200 units (Morse, 1994); for a homogeneous sample Kuzel (1992) made are commendation of 6 - 8 participants and 12 – 20 data sources when looking for disconfirming evidence or trying achieving maximum variation. Bertaux (1981) made a recommendation of 15 participants as the smallest acceptable sample size in qualitative research. Guest et al (2006) note that the two studies that provided evidence for their recommendations were studies conducted by Graves (2002:73) for correlative analysis that made a recommendation of 60 – 120 participants and Romney, Batchelder and Waller (1986:326) made a recommendation of as low as four participants for studies involving high competent participants. However, Guest et al (2006:59) when carrying out an experiment with data saturation and variability involving 60 in-depth interviews with women at high risk of contracting HIV and who could be used for HIV prevention programmes in Ghana and Nigeria found that saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews, although basic elements for themes were present as early as six interviews. Guest et al (2006) therefore recommended a sample size of 12 as being sufficient when one wants to understand common perceptions and experiences of a relatively homogeneous group. Guest et al (2006) further explains that Nielsen and Landauer (1993) created a mathematical model based on six different qualitative research projects on technology usability which demonstrated that six research participants could uncover 80% of the usability problems and after 12 participants could only uncover up to 90% of the usability problems. This means that additional respondents after the 12 were not adding any significant amount
of new data. This study therefore adopted a sample size of 12 respondents for each of the eight categories of respondents which the researcher considered relatively homogenous based on the recommendation by Guest et al (2006) for homogenous samples. The eight categories of respondents for this study included Policy makers in Government and private sector at a level of Principal Secretary, Executive Director, Director and Deputy director; Members of Parliament belonging to Parliamentary Committee on Media Issues and Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs; information scientists who included librarians, documentalists, archivists and ICT specialists; information services providers who included Internet service providers, media houses; academicians, researchers, legal experts and Information users, those that use libraries, archives and documentation centers for their information needs. The 12 respondents from each of the 8 categories gave a sample size of 96 respondents as indicated in table 3.1 below. The categories of respondents were determined based on the national information system in Malawi and the role a particular category of respondents play in information policy development (Cf 1.4). These respondents were purposively sampled (Cf 3.3.5) and the researcher targeted people he felt had the knowledge and experience in national information policy as well as information services. However, the researcher managed to interview 82 respondents out of the targeted 96 respondents which meant that the response rate was 85%.
Table 3.1: Targeted sample size and number of those interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category number</th>
<th>Name of Category of research participants</th>
<th>Number targeted</th>
<th>Number interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Policy makers in Government and private sector at a level of Principal Secretary, Executive Director, Director and Deputy director</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>members of parliament belonging to parliamentary committee on media issues and Parliamentary committee on legal affairs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>information scientists who included librarians, documentalists, archivists and ICT specialists</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>information services providers who included Internet service providers, publishers, printers, book sellers, and media houses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Academicians</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Legal experts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Information users, those that use libraries, archives and documentation centers for their information needs.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.5 Data collection

Data was collected using the following methods:

3.3.5.1 Documentary analysis

Documentary analysis was conducted to review available relevant literature in order to gain background knowledge on the subject and obtain useful leads. Data in form of document summaries were gathered from policies, legislation, reports, journals, databases, websites and other relevant documents from government and private institutions in Malawi. This formed back ground information to the study. The advantage of using documentary analysis is that it is cheap, time effective and large amounts of information can be obtained very quickly. The researcher has no influence over what the document says as is the case with interviews and observations (Robson, 2002:349).
A researcher may also use documents to cross-validate or invalidate other methods. Documents encourage researchers to be resourceful and innovative in locating and interpreting information. However, it is sometimes difficult to gain access to the records or reports required. For instance, the researcher could not access some of the documents particularly those in international electronic databases. Access was restricted and required subscription or purchasing the document. Furthermore, documents may contain results which are outdated and sometimes incorrect, and the amount of information available may be very limited. In addition, the researcher needs to understand the grounds for which the document was written as this may affect the focus of the content. For example, the researcher could not get statistics on school libraries in Malawi. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology publishes education statistics every year but has not included statistics on school libraries although they have produced statistics on school buildings and toilets in Malawi. According to an official from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, they have not included such statistics because nobody has ever demanded them. Documents constitute a powerful source of information when used together with other methods. Some documents may demand a lot of researcher’s time because of the very detailed nature of the contents despite providing revealing information on the topic. Sometimes the authenticity of the document may not be clear or known (Robson, 2002:349).

3.3.5.2 In-depth interview with key informants

This study used interviews as the main method of collecting data. In-depth interviews are interviews conducted to elicit people’s views, opinions, attitudes and experiences. They are either semi-structured or unstructured. The information generated through
these two types of interviews is generally rich, in-depth material that gives the researcher a comprehensive understanding of the informant’s perspective on the topic under investigation (Arksey, 2004:267). According to Bryman (2004:113) in a semi-structured interview, a researcher prepares a list of questions to ask during the interview, referred to as an interview guide, but not necessarily following the order on the guide. The researcher however, is obliged to ask all questions appearing on the schedule and to use similar wording for all the interviewees. The interviewer may ask further questions emanating from the responses and that there is flexibility in the way the interviewee may give responses. Bloch (2004:165) adds that part of a semi-structured interview contains prearranged questions asked in a particular order while in the other part questions are varied to explore the views of the interviewee in great detail. Bloch (2004:165) further opines that in a semi-structured interview a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data. In an unstructured interview, the researcher has a general area of interest and lets the conversation develop within the area. It can be completely informal and it is also referred to as unstandardised interview. There are no fixed set of questions and the questions will vary from one research participant to the other. It allows flexibility and great depth coverage Robson (2002:270).

The study adopted semi-structured interviews in order to enhance validity and reliability since respondents were exposed to the same questions unlike using unstructured interviews. Eighty-two face-to-face individual in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants using an interview guide which was developed based on thematic areas emanating from the research questions. The interview guide had five sections numbered A to E as indicated in appendix 4. Section A covered research participants’
profile data which looked at category of research participants, gender, age and levels of education. Section B dealt with access to information, Section C contained questions on impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy, Section D covered capacity building in information services and Section E covered the legal and regulatory framework on information services, thus covering the four objectives of the study. The interview guide contained closed and open ended questions to solicit in-depth information pertaining to the four research questions. Use of open-ended questions allows respondents to express themselves in their own words without restrictions regarding their experiences or opinions on a phenomenon. Since open-ended questions do not suggest any answers to research participants, the researcher is able to learn more from what the respondent knows or understands about a particular phenomenon. They also provide an opportunity to the researcher to investigate new issues or areas the researcher does not fully understand. However, they consume a lot of time to administer as interviewees can talk at length covering a number of issues. Analysis of open-ended questions is difficult, time consuming and expensive as it involves transcribing, identification of themes and categories, and coding. (Bryman, 2004:145-147)

On the other hand, use of closed questions enhances comparison of answers because they are standardised. Responses are easier and relatively inexpensive to analyze. The options provided may clarify the meaning of a question to respondents. They are quicker and easier to administer because there is very little to write or talk about for both the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman, 2004:145-147). However, closed questions are suitable for factual information such as age, gender, education. They often do not
generate new information outside the available options. Respondents in some instances have problems in choosing the right option when the available options seem to be closely related. The available options may not cater for all the possible answers and this may lead to bias despite providing for ‘other replies’ because the tendency is that most respondents do not think beyond the options provided (Bryman, 2004:145-147). The options may not present or fit the opinion of the interviewee and the “I don’t know” option is provided. Interviewees may interpret the options differently and end up giving answers which are not true thereby compromising validity of the responses. Closed questions do not really engage the interviewee into a conversation and this affects the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Bryman, 2004:145-147).

Pilot study

This researcher pre-tested the interview guide on three respondents who did not participate in the actual study. The pre-testing was done to determine clarity and suitability of the questions and to get an indication of how long each interview would last, so that if need be it should be amended. All the three respondents recommended the inclusion of an option ‘average’ among the pre-categorized answers in questions 16a, 17, 18, and 21. The categorized responses to these questions were therefore amended to include the option ‘average’ as proposed (Cf appendix 6).

Using the interviewing method as a data collection technique was time consuming because a lot of time was spent on scheduling as well as conducting the interviews. Interviewing and transcribing requires skill and experience to get the most out of them. Interviews may provide lesser confidence in the anonymity of respondents since the
interviewer knows the particulars of the respondents although there is an assurance about their anonymity. This may influence their responses. However, researchers have argued that it is not always true that one will obtain true responses when a respondent remains anonymous in a study. In some cases where a researcher is studying complex and sensitive issues, a face-to-face interview may provide more revealing information than using a questionnaire which guarantees the anonymity of a respondent (Selltiz et al 1959: 240). Grinyer (2002:online) further argues that some respondents feel that they need to be recognised and acknowledged and that they will lose ownership of information if they remain anonymous in a study. The researcher feels that the issue of anonymity of respondents in a study should be optional. Respondents should be left to decide whether to remain anonymous or to be acknowledged but an explanation on what the options entail should be provided for them to make an informed decision. This could be done in the same way when a researcher is seeking consent from a respondent to participate in a study.

Despite the above mentioned weaknesses, it is the opinion of the researcher that the interviews provided rich and revealing information as individual interviews offered the possibility of probing on interesting responses in a way the other methods couldn’t do. People were prepared to take part in the study because all they were expected to do was to speak. The researcher had an opportunity to observe what respondents accounted for and how they accounted for the incidents. Through the interviews, the researcher was able to receive information from respondents on what they knew, believed, expected, felt, needed and even the reasons. Furthermore, the key informants
targeted were also a determining factor on the choice of face-to-face individual interviews because of the status of their office and their physical localities could not allow them to be pooled together for a focus group discussion. Since the objectives of the study were aimed at exploring the perception, beliefs and experiences of the key informants, in-depth interviews were deemed to be a suitable qualitative technique as opposed to focus group discussions which largely explore collective phenomenon and not individual ones (Robson, 2002:289).

All the face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researcher and were done at the respondents’ offices during working hours as authority was sought from heads of institutions before the interviews. The interviews were conducted in English in which all the research participants were well versed. An interview with one respondent was lasting an average of 45 minutes. All the scheduled interviews were recorded in a diary for proper follow ups. The interviewer took down notes verbatim of the responses during the interviews and also recorded the interviews using a voice recorder.

Respondents were categorized in an attempt to capture data that best reflected their perceptions and experiences in line with the four research questions and objectives (Cf 1.6 and 1.7). Since the sample was purposively selected, it was believed that the respondents were familiar with policy matters as well as issues surrounding information services.

3.3.5.3 Observations

The researcher carried out some observations using an observation guide (Cf appendix 8) in order to complement information obtained during in-depth-interviews (Woods,
Observations as woods (2006:online) puts are primarily directed towards describing and understanding behavior as it occurs in a natural setting unlike other methods that largely rely on subjects recounting their experiences which may not be a true reflection of their behavior. Robson (2002:310, 312) adds that observations are used as a primary data collection method in investigations aimed at providing accurate description of situations. However, the method has also been used to confirm findings obtained through other data collection methods such as interviews and questionnaires. The method is also ideal in instances where subjects can’t give verbal responses or are not prepared to talk. When using the observation method, the researcher has an opportunity to record events as and when they occur (Selltiz et al 1959:203). The advantage of using observation technique is that a researcher does not ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes, but simply watches what they do and listens to what they say. Observations are therefore able to deal with inconsistencies which often arise between what respondents say and what they actually do (Robson, 2002:310).

Observations are also suitable in cases where participants may not be prepared to report. This may be due to participants not having the time, or not willing to be interviewed or questioning their inclusion in the study or refusing to be tested. Observations are less demanding as they may only require some active cooperation from subjects. In addition, the researcher has an opportunity to record events as they occur naturally (Selltiz et al 1959:203).

However, the observer may affect the situation under observation. It is also time consuming and requires patience (Robson 2002:311). It is often impossible to predict
the precise time an event might occur to enable the researcher be present to observe it. Duration of events may also affect the practical possibility of observation technique. Some events that people may be willing to report say in interviews may not be possible and accessible to observations for instance sexual behavior (Selltiz et al 1959:203)

There are two broad types of observational research designs which a researcher may opt to use in a study and these are the participant observer and non-participant observer (Stangor, 2011:129). Stangor (2011:129) classifies them into acknowledged and unacknowledged participant; and acknowledged and unacknowledged non-participant observer. Stangor (2011:129) argues that the choice on which one to use depends on the goals of the research, the ability to obtain access to the population and ethical principles.

The acknowledged and unacknowledged participant

The acknowledged participant may be used when a researcher feels that it is ethically wrong or it will not be possible to hide his/her identity. It is also appropriate in instances where the phenomenon the researcher wants to observe is difficult to gain access to. However the main problem with this approach is reactivity. People tend to change their behaviour and even avoid the researcher altogether if they know a researcher is recording information (Stangor, 2011:130).

The unacknowledged participant is when a researcher lives among the people being observed as one of them without letting them know about it. The researcher is able to get closer to the respondents and is able to know in detail the people being observed. However, it may not be easy for the researcher to remain objective when he/she gets
too close to the observed participants. The technique may also pose some ethical problems because people being observed are participating in a research project without knowing. Furthermore, the presence of the researcher may influence the behaviour of participants because the researcher has to establish some role within the group (Stangor, 2011:130).

**Acknowledged and unacknowledged non-participant observer**

Stangor (2011:131-132) observes that a researcher may use non-participant observer approach when he/she does not want or cannot be a participant of the group being studied. The researcher observes the behaviour of interest without actively taking part. This allows the researcher to be more objective because he/she does not develop close relationships with the people being observed. The observer has more time watching other people and recording relevant data. Stangor (2011:131-132) further observes that the non-participant observer is relieved of the burden of acting like a participant and maintaining a cover which may require substantial effort. The non-participant observer may be acknowledged or unacknowledged.

The researcher becomes an acknowledged non-participant observer when he/she makes his presence known by those being observed. This may be because the researcher is convinced that it is unethical or impossible to conceal his identity. This approach becomes handy when a researcher wants to access difficult to access behaviour. However, respondents are bound to change their behaviour once they know that they are being observed.
The unacknowledged non-participant observer technique entails that the researcher does not reveal his/her presence to those that are being observed. This brings in issues of ethics. (Stangor, 2011:132) argues that it is unethical to make people participate in a study without letting them know as this may violate the confidentiality of the data.

This study adopted the acknowledged non-participant observer. Respondents were aware of his presence because official permission had to be sought first from heads of institutions for him to gain access to the respondents. This also required acknowledging the research to those being observed (Stangor, 2011). The researcher also sought consent from respondents before participating in the study.

The researcher carried out observations in six libraries which were conveniently located to the researcher during data collection. The observations focused on the availability and use of ICTs in libraries and library collection in relation to local content. At each of the six libraries, observations were done soon after completing interviews with respondents. The observations were carried out in two government libraries (Malawi Human Rights Commission and the National Archives of Malawi), two of the University of Malawi libraries (Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN) and the Polytechnic), National Library Service and Mzuzu University Library. The observations were lasting thirty minutes in each institution. The researcher felt that it was important to carry out some observations in order to confirm and complement information obtained during in-depth interviews (Woods, 2006; Robson, 2002:312). This gave the researcher some understanding of the availability and usage of ICTs in libraries, and the availability of local content in libraries. The researcher compiled observation notes which were later subjected to content analysis. The researcher observed that all the six libraries had ICT
facilities. However the researcher noticed that ICT facilities in the two government libraries were only meant for officers managing the library and not users. There was only one computer in each library and had Internet though it was slow. The researcher further observed that in the three academic libraries there were ICT facilities with Internet and were also available to users particularly students. This was also true for National Library Service. However, Internet services were inadequate with very few computers available to users and the Internet was slow. Furthermore users were being charged for using the Internet.

Collections in these libraries largely comprised foreign publications and were in English. Government libraries maintained very small collections of local content with the exception of the National Archives of Malawi probably because of the nature of its mandate (Cf 1.4.1.3). The National Library Service and university libraries maintained a considerable size of the Malawiana collection though proportionally were very small to the general collection. The Malawiana collection in the university libraries mainly comprised dissertations and theses of students.

3.3.6 Challenges the researcher encountered in the field

The researcher encountered a number of challenges during data collection. The researcher had to collect data from a considerable number of respondents within a short period of time. Data collection was done in two months from 28 June to 30 August 2011. The researcher is currently based at University of Fort Hare in South Africa and had to travel to Malawi to collect data for the study. In addition, the geographical location of respondents also posed a challenge to the researcher as respondents were distributed
in four different districts which were very far apart. The researcher had to travel from Lilongwe, his duty station to Mzuzu, some 450 Kilometers away to the North, travel to Blantyre some 350 Kilometers to the South and to Zomba some 250 Kilometers away to the South East. Furthermore, research expenses relating to travel were a challenge to the researcher because no funds were identified for the research project. All costs were borne by the researcher who unfortunately happened to be on an unpaid study leave at that time.

Three of the targeted respondents were reluctant to be interviewed and share the information with the researcher after learning that the research was for academic purposes. They instead referred the researcher to other people. Fortunately the alternative respondents were also helpful because they were knowledgeable in national information policy issues and information services in Malawi.

Fifteen respondents failed to keep their initial appointments for interviews with the researcher after all arrangements had been made because they were busy. New appointments had to be scheduled.

There were also a lot of disturbances when interviews were being conducted since the interviews were conducted during working hours at respondents' offices. Interviews had to be interrupted to allow respondents to attend to official commitments. Consequently, interviews took longer than anticipated and more time was lost.

In addition, travelling to meet respondents within Lilongwe and to other districts was a very big challenge to the researcher due to the scarcity of fuel which had hit the country. Despite all this the study registered an 85% response rate (Cf 3.3.6).
3.3.7 Data analysis

According to Durrheim (2006:52), the purpose of data analysis is to convert data into an answer to the original research question(s). The researcher is therefore, required to use data analysis techniques that fit the design of the study and will provide answers to research question(s). Data analysis may either use quantitative or qualitative techniques. Quantitative techniques use a range of statistical analyses to generate meaning out of the data while qualitative techniques focus on identifying themes from the data and how the themes relate to each other. In this study, quantitative data from closed questions were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 to generate descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics according to Cramer:

“simply describe the main features of the results and no attempt is made to draw any inferences from them as is the case with inferential statistics. The only way of summarizing qualitative variables is to count the number of cases that fall into a particular category and to present these frequencies as they are or as a percentage of the total number of cases” (Cramer 2004: 236-237).

Data were first cleaned to detect errors and omissions and to correct where possible. Secondly, data were coded where variables were assigned numerical values for instance question two in section A on research participant’s profile data, where research participants indicated their gender as male or female. These were coded as, 1 = male and 2 = female. Thirdly data were entered into the SPSS Version 16.0 for processing and archiving. Statistical analyses were run and the results were presented in tabular and graphical form showing frequencies and percentages as outlined in Chapter 4. Qualitative data from open ended responses were subjected to content analysis. Content Analysis entails analysis of the contents of an interview in order to identify the
main themes that emerge from the responses given by the research participants. In qualitative research data analysis normally starts as soon as data collection begins. Data are examined from time to time to identify emerging themes and this also helps in detecting a saturation point. Data were analysed manually according to the method outlined by Taylor-Powell and Reyner (2003:2-5) which included:

- Get to know your data. The researcher needs to have a good understanding of the data in order to make a good analysis. The open ended responses from the eight-two semi-structured interviews were first transcribed verbatim and compared to interview notes for corrections. The researcher read the data carefully for several times to familiarize himself with the data.

- Focusing the analysis. All responses from open ended questions from the eight-two research participants were arranged by question in order to identify consistencies and differences.

- The researcher identifies themes or patterns such as ideas, concepts, incidents, terminology or phrases used. Text was read over and over again to identify themes.

- Grouping of similar answers together. Similar responses were grouped together ready for categorization.

- Categorize information. Responses were then organized into coherent categories that summarized and brought meaning to the text.

- Naming of categories. Each category was then given a descriptive name.

- Interpretation. Relationships between themes are used to elucidate the findings. Summaries were drawn based on identified relationships between themes.
Exemplars which are direct quotations of research participants picked from interviews and interview notes were used to expound themes (Taylor-Powell and Reyner, 2003:2-5).

For purposes of the exemplars, research participants were each given a code according to the eight categories of the research participants in the study population (Cf 3.3.4). For instance if the research participant was a policy maker he/she was given code PM 01 standing for research participant number 01 in that category. Codes used for the other categories included: IS for the category of information scientists. RES for the category of researchers, AC for the category of academicians, ISP for the category of information service providers, LEG for the category of legislators, LE for the category of legal experts and IU for the category of information users.

3.4 Validity and reliability

According to Robson (2002:100-101) and Babbie (2007:146) validity refers to the accuracy of the results and the findings being able to be generalized to other settings or population. Becker and Bryman (2004:184) observe that this is a stand often taken by quantitative researchers who characteristically would want to generalize their findings to a wider population than the sample size of their study and therefore will always emphasize on obtaining a representative sample by adopting probability and random sampling methods. However, Becker and Bryman (2004:182-184) argue that the aim in qualitative research is not to generalize to the wider population but to provide a theoretical understanding that can be taken up by other researchers. They further argue that what is important is how well the researcher’s observations relate to theoretical ideas. Observations in this study are consistent with theoretical ideas. For instance the
study established that access to government information is low in Malawi due to the absence of a national information policy a view supported by Fitzgerald (2010) who observes that countries without a national information policy continue having problems to access government information.

Reliability, according to Becker and Bryman (2004:182, 184) and Babbie (2007:143) relate to consistency of findings and the study being able to be replicated. They acknowledge that replication of research findings is of great concern to researchers. Researchers tend to have confidence in research findings that are capable of being replicated by others wishing to repeat the investigation. Replication is regarded as the means of cross-checking the findings of a study. Babbie (2007:508) sums it up by saying ‘replication is an essential norm of science. A single study does not prove a point only a series of studies can begin to do so.’

Debate has been going on in literature among qualitative researchers on the use and meaning of the terms validity and reliability in qualitative research. Bryman (2004:30) notes that Lincoln and Goba (1985) proposed ‘trustworthiness’ as an alternative term for validity and reliability in qualitative studies. Bryman (2004:30) further observe that Lincoln and Goba (1985) contend that all characteristics of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) have a corresponding characteristic in validity and reliability. They explain that credibility corresponds to internal validity and relates to findings being true; Transferability corresponds to external validity and measures the extent to which findings can be generalized; dependability corresponds to reliability and relates to the likelihood of findings being consistent and; Confirmability
corresponds to objectivity and determines the extent the researcher may have influenced the findings.

To uphold the principles of validity and reliability, in this case trustworthiness, the study adopted a number of measures. Three methods were employed for collecting data. In-depth interviews were complimented by document analysis and observation, completing what is referred to as triangulation. Triangulation is the use of several methods to investigate a phenomenon in qualitative research and increases the chances of obtaining rich and accurate findings of the study (Woods, 2006:online). Furthermore, in-depth interviews provided the researcher with an opportunity to verify data with respondents during the interview to enhance validity and reliability of the study (Woods, 2006:online). The data recorded on the voice recorder can also be analyzed again by other researchers. The study used SPSS to analyse data obtained from closed questions. The use of computer packages to analyze data leads to a more organised analysis and guards against biases and improves validity and reliability. The researcher was also watchful of his personal biases and interference during interviews through what Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006:322) referred to as ‘bracketing’. It requires a researcher to be neutral about the phenomenon and not to exerting any influence on the research process with his feelings or prior knowledge of the phenomenon. The use of a semi-structured interview also enhanced validity and reliability of the study because all research participants were subjected to the same questions (Bryman, 2004:113).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Bryman (2004:506) observes that the issue of ethics in research relates to the role of values in the research process which are now of a major concern. Ethics look at how
people participating in a study ought to be treated and also considers research activities in which to engage them. Bryman (2004) notes that ethics in social research are meant to check whether there is harm to participants, there is lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception where researchers hide the true nature of their research.

The study had no known or perceived risks. However, ethical clearance was sought from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Fort Hare. The South African Health Act No. 61 of 2003 requires the protection of research participants and researchers to adhere to research ethics when conducting their studies. The researcher also obtained clearance from the National Commission for Science and Technology to conduct research in Malawi as outlined in Appendix 4 and 5. The NCST is mandated by the Science and Technology Act of 2003 to coordinate research, science and technology activities in Malawi. Verbal consent was sought from all key informants before commencing an interview and after explaining the purpose of the study, how they were selected, and how the information collected would be used as outlined in the interview guide appearing in appendix 6. A letter from the Director General of the National Commission for Science and Technology was also sent to all identified research participants in advance introducing the researcher and requesting for an appointment for an interview. The letter is attached as appendix 2. The letter also explained the purpose of the study, how a research participant was identified, how the information collected would be used and how the anonymity of the research participants would be upheld. In terms of confidentiality of the information obtained and anonymity of the participants, no names were used instead research participants were only identified
by a code (Cf 3.3.7). There was also an assurance clause in the letter that the information would solely be used for the purposes of the study.

3.6 Summary of the chapter

The chapter has discussed the research design employed in order to answer the four research questions. Three data collection techniques used in the study have been described which included, in-depth interviews, document analysis and observations. Their strengths and weaknesses and the basis of their choice discussed. Study population, sampling procedure and sample size have been specified. Data analysis has been outlined. Validity and reliability of the findings and ethical considerations have also been discussed. The next chapter covers data analysis and interpretation.
Chapter 4

Data presentation and analysis

4.1 Introduction

As outlined in chapter 1, this study was aimed at exploring the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. This chapter is organized according to the four research questions posed in chapter 1. It first looks at the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on access to information in Malawi, secondly it looks at the impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi; thirdly it examines how the absence of an overarching national information policy in Malawi has affected capacity development in information services in Malawi and; finally it looks at the implications of the absence of an overarching national information policy on the legal and regulatory framework in Malawi.

4.2 Demographic description of the respondents

The researcher collected biographical information of the respondents in order to have an understanding of their characteristics. Participants in this study have been described in terms of their categories, gender, age and level of education.

4.2.1 Respondents’ profiles

Participants who took part in the study comprised 12 (14.6%) policy makers, 4 (4.9%) legislators, 12 (14.6%) information users, 12 (14.6%) information scientists, 12 (14.6%) information service providers, 12 (14.6%) researchers, 12 (14.6%) academicians and 6 (7.3%) legal experts. Chart 4.1 below describes the categories of the respondents.
The researcher collected data from a purposively selected sample that he felt had the knowledge and experience in information policy matters as well as information services as outlined in chapter 3. The categories of respondents comprised main players in the information sector and those that had a role in information policy. They were therefore drawn based on the national information system in Malawi (Cf 1.4) which include, libraries; ICT industries; mass media; research and development establishments and all other professionals and institutions involved in the generation, collection, storage and dissemination of information. The study also included users of the information services as important stakeholders in the information sector. This study targeted policy makers and legislators because of their responsibilities in policy development and approval of legislation related to information and information services; legal experts for the crafting and interpretation of laws relating to information services; academicians because of their expertise in capacity building through education and training; researchers because they generate information and knowledge; information scientists because they manage
information and ICTs; information providers for the delivery of information services and; information users for their experiences in using information services provided.

4.2.2 Gender

The gender distribution of the participants is outlined in Chart 4.2 below. The chart shows that there were more male than female participants in the study. There were 68 (83%) male research participants and 14 (17%) female research participants.

![Gender distribution of the respondents](image)

Chart 4.2: Gender distribution of the respondents

The results suggest that there were more men than women in the area of information policy and information services in Malawi. This could be an indication of gender disparities that exist in Malawi in many sectors including the information sector. The involvement of women at political, policy and decision making levels continues to be low. Pitamber and Rugimbana (2005:7) argue that democratic participation of women is still low at national and local government level compared to that of men in Malawi. The results further suggest that there were not many qualified women to assume high
positions at policy level in the information sector. This may be due to the existing gender disparities in accessing higher education. The 2008 population census revealed that gender inequalities still prevail in many aspects of Malawi’s population (NSO, 2008). Women were found to be more disadvantaged than their male counterparts in most respects for instance in access to higher education, literacy, ownership of housing and household assets (NSO, 2008).

4.2.3 Age categories

The researcher asked the participants to indicate their age brackets. The age brackets provided for were: 19 – 25 years, 26 – 36 years, 37 – 47 years, 48 - 59 years and 60 + years. As reflected in Chart 4.3 below, the highest proportion, 39 (47.6%) of the participants were in the age bracket of 37- 47 years. 12 (24.4%) participants were in age bracket of 26-36, 12 (24.4%) participants were in age bracket of 48-59 years, 1 (1.2%) participant was in the age bracket of 19-25 years and 2 (2.4%) participants were in the age category of 60 years and above.

![Chart 4.3: Age brackets of respondents](chart.png)
Since the study employed a purposive sampling, the researcher targeted participants he considered as having the knowledge or experience in information policy and information services. The researcher felt he could not interview people aged less than 18 years for ethical reasons. Laws of Malawi recognise those under 18 as minors. In addition at the age of 18 one would still be in secondary school and may not have been knowledgeable enough about issues of information policy and services. Malawi follows the 8-4-4 education structure where a learner spends eight years in primary school, four years in secondary school and four years at university. Children enter primary school at the age of six (NSO, 2008). Hence, the researcher started with the age bracket of 19-25 years in anticipation that respondents in that age bracket had completed their secondary school education, were working or pursuing tertiary education and had some knowledge regarding information services. The only respondent in that age group had just graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Mzuzu University in Library and Information Science. The respondent was doing ‘internship’ at the National Assembly Library. The high percentage of participants in age brackets of 37-47 years could be attributed to Malawi’s youthful population (NSO, 2011). The low percentage in age group of 60+ years was probably because 60 years is the retirement age in Malawi except for people working with the judiciary where one can retire at 65 years. The results also suggested that the young age group dominates in the area of information policy and information services in Malawi.

4.2.4 Levels of education

The researcher wanted to find out about education levels of the respondents as level of education has an effect on the awareness and understanding of the subject.
Qualifications of the respondents varied from Undergraduate diploma to PhD. As shown in Chart 4.4 below 51 (62.2%) of the respondents had Master’s degrees, 21 (25.6%) of the respondents had Bachelor’s degrees, 6 (7.3%) of the respondents had PhD degree qualifications and 2 (2.4%) of the respondents had Postgraduate diploma qualifications and 2 (2.4%) respondents had Undergraduate diplomas.

Chart 4.4: Education and training levels of respondents

The results indicate that the respondents were well educated and it was likely that they had good understanding of the subject. The high numbers of respondents with a master’s degree could also be an indication that with the ever changing work environment people are now pursuing higher education to acquire more and higher level skills to enable them perform better and cope with the new demands of the environment (Nassimbeni and de Jager 2000:194).
4.3 Access to information services

As discussed in chapter 2 (Cf 2.1.1), the first goal of a national information policy is to democratize access to information. This entails the provision and use of information and ICTs. According to Lor and Britz (2007:392) access to information allows citizens’ participation in democratic processes and to make informed choices that lead to development of society. When information becomes readily accessible, individuals and communities engage in more discussions and this gives rise to innovation. The following section looks at access to information services in Malawi; the state of publishing industry in Malawi; access to information produced by government and government institutions; libraries facilitating access to information and; perceived challenges to access to information in Malawi.

4.3.1 Access to information in Malawi

With the emergence of information and knowledge societies, access to information is now seen as a fundamental right (Lor and Britz, 2007:388). The researcher then asked respondents on how they viewed access to information in Malawi. The results appearing in Chart 4.6 below show that 54 (65.9%) of the respondents indicated that access to information was low, 21 (25.6%) of the respondents said it was adequate, 6 (7.3%) of the respondents indicated that it was very low and only one (1.2%) of the respondents said it was high.
A national information policy is aimed at enhancing free access to information. The results therefore suggest that in the absence of a policy, people in Malawi might not have acquired the right to freely access and use information. Article 37 of the 1994 Constitution of the Republic of Malawi guarantees everyone the right to access to information but subject to relevant legislation being put in place. Malawi does not have that legislation up to now. Development of a national information policy would have led to development of a related piece of legislation to assure the citizenry access to information. The results further suggest that society might not have developed the necessary competencies to access information and ICTs, and to be able to utilise them. New and sophisticated skills are required in the wake of the information explosion and advancements in ICTs so that users are able to search through volumes of information sources and resources in order to locate and access information (Nassimbeni and de Jager, 2000). The results further suggest that ICTs in Malawi were not universally available. The majority of the people is therefore denied the opportunity to access and utilise ICTs. ICTs provide the means to the flow and access to information for day-to-
day activities. Society has limited participation in the democratic processes of the country if there is low access to information. Access to information enables society to engage in debate, form opinions and choices and participate in developmental activities (Lor and Britz, 2007).

4.3.2 The state of publishing industry in Malawi

One of the areas a national information policy focuses on in order to enhance access to information is the publishing industry (Arnold, 2002). Publishing enhances access to information through the availability of local content and contributes to the development of a country. According to the World Bank (2011:online) a strong local publishing industry contributes significantly to the socio-economic development of a country. It promotes literacy levels, education and empowerment of the citizenry. It provides employment opportunities for people with various skills like writers, designers, artists, editors, publishers, printers, freighters, wholesalers, and retailers. The researcher thus asked respondents to indicate what they thought was the state of publishing industry in Malawi, including the publishing of research findings. The in-depth interviews revealed that 71 (86.6%) of the respondents thought that the publishing industry was underdeveloped, 6 (7.3%) of the respondents said very underdeveloped, 4 (4.9%) of the respondents said it was very developed and 1 (1.2%) of the respondents said it was non-existent. Chart 4.7 below shows the results of the responses.
However, the researcher observed some publishing of government publications, books, reports, school books (text books), children’s books and newspapers in the directory of publishers (National Archives of Malawi, 2008: 86-116). The list had a total of 224 publishers comprising government Ministries, Departments and institutions, universities, research institutions, individuals, NGOs, churches, private organisations, media houses and international organisations. Government-affiliated organisations constituted 42.4% of the publishers listed in the directory. The researcher also observed a significant presence of publications from international publishers, an indication that Malawi imports publications. In terms of publishing of research findings, respondents noted that a significant number of research projects completed in the country are supported by international research organizations and are published in international journals. Most of the institutions in Malawi do not have funds for research and publishing as a result of which very few individual researchers who most of the times source own funding are
into publishing. The researcher also observed that there were about nine titles of peer-reviewed journals in Malawi, which included:

- The Malawi Medical Journal published by the College of Medicine
- The Journal of Social Sciences published by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Chancellor College
- The Journal of Humanities published by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Chancellor College
- The Malawi Journal of Science published by the Faculty of Science at Chancellor College
- Malawi Journal of Education and Development published by Faculty of Education at Chancellor College
- Malilime: Malawi Journal of Linguistics published by the Center for Language Studies, University of Malawi
- Bunda Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Science and Technology published by Bunda College
- Malawi Journal of Aquaculture and Fisheries published by Bunda College
- Malawi Law Journal published by the Malawi Law Society in conjunction with the Faculty of Law at Chancellor College.

However, a number of these journals were not being published regularly as scheduled due to lack of funds and articles to publish. For instance the Malawi Journal of Science is scheduled to be published once or twice a year depending on the number of manuscripts received and financial resources available but was last published in 2009.
The Malawi Journal of humanities last came out in 2003 (Chancellor College, 2012:Online) and Malilime: Malawi journal of linguistics was last published in 2007 (Center for language studies, 2012:Online). The researcher further observed that the most active journals which came out regularly were the Malawi Medical Journal, which is published quarterly (College of Medicine, 2012:Online) and the Malawi Law Journal which is published biannually (Malawi law Society, 2012:Online).

Publishing enhances access to information which is one of the goals of a national information policy. The results suggest that Malawi has not realised the need to develop local content. The output of the publishing industry is low. Government has not put up policy measures to encourage production of local content of interest to the citizenry. Malawi has therefore, very few established individuals and organisations who publish local content in the country. The results further suggest that Malawi imports content because of the undeveloped local publishing industry. It also means that most of the writers from Malawi have to publish with renowned publishers abroad and they have to adhere to their policies. Malawi may therefore continue to rely on the North for its own local information. This posed challenges to the development of collections in libraries with local content from local authors. A national information policy would therefore seek to promote the development of the local publishing industry. A strong local publishing industry enhances access to information particularly local content. In addition a vibrant publishing industry promotes the development of libraries in a country because of the availability of local content to the citizenry (Cornish, 1998; Odini, 1998).
4.3.3 Access to information produced by government and government-affiliated institutions

Governments, through their institutions generate a lot of information and play a major role in the market both as producers and consumers of information. Much of this information is of value and relevance to the community for scientific, social and cultural benefits (Fitzgerald, 2010:502). Governments therefore have a responsibility of providing the necessary information to the public. The researcher wanted to find out the perception of the respondents on access to information produced by government or its institutions in Malawi. Chart 4.8 below shows that 47 (57.3%) participants indicated that access to government information was low, 12 (14.6%) of the participants indicated that access was average, 16 (19.5%) of the participants said it was very low and 7 (8.5%) of the participants said it was high. The results indicate that the largest proportion of the participants 47 (57.3%) regarded access to information produced by government and government institutions in Malawi as low. They attributed the low access to information generated by government to the absence of a policy and legislation on access to public information. However, the interviews also revealed that in 2003, the government of Malawi established a government-wide area network through the Department of Information Systems and Technology Management Services (DISTMS), to link all government offices. The establishment of the network was part of the e-government initiative. It was envisaged that the network would enhance information flow and sharing among government institutions thereby improving government’s effectiveness and efficiency and consequently reduce operational costs. The network also hosted the Government website. Respondents noted that content is often not comprehensive and
outdated, and it is not available in local languages. The system is unreliable, it frequently breaks down, speed is relatively slow, back up services are problematic due to inadequate expertise and human resources. The system is yet to be rolled out to all government offices in the country. Interviews with respondents also revealed that government towards the beginning of 2011 established a unit in the Office of the President and Cabinet to be solely responsible for e-government programmes as well as revisit the institutional framework for ICT in the public sector and provide strategic leadership in ICT.

Chart 4.7: Access to information produced by government and government institutions

A national information policy is meant to enhance access to information which includes information produced by government or its institutions (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). Government is regarded as one of the biggest producers of information in a country that people need to have access to for their day-to-day life. The results suggested that in Malawi, people have limited access to information produced by the government and its institutions, yet this information is very crucial to the wellbeing of the citizenry.
Government therefore, has the moral obligation to make this information accessible by the public. However, in the absence of a national information policy and related legislation, citizens in Malawi did not have access rights to guarantee them access to information produced by government and its agencies on request. The results further implied that the public sector in Malawi may not be transparent enough because government is not obliged to make its information accessible. Fitzgerald (2010) observes that people will continue experiencing challenges to have access to government information in countries that have not developed a national information policy like Malawi.

4.3.4 Libraries as facilitators of access to information in Malawi

For society to operate effectively it requires information to be made available through channels open to the public. Libraries are one such channel (Hamilton and Pors 2003:409). Libraries also play a major role in narrowing the gap for those that do not have access to the Internet at home, office or school. For instance, public libraries in many countries offer free Internet services to users (Lor and Britz 2010:662). The researcher therefore wanted to find out from respondents whether libraries in Malawi facilitate access to information. Interviews revealed that 47 (57.3%) of the respondents said 'yes' though some 20 (24.4%) said yes with reservations and 15 (18.3%) of the respondents said 'no'. The results shown in Chart 4.9 below indicated that the largest proportion 67 (81.7%) of the respondents felt that libraries were facilitating access to information while a few respondents felt were not.
Results indicate that libraries in Malawi facilitate access to information which is one of the objectives of a national information policy. However, libraries faced a number of challenges which might have affected the free flow and sharing of information among the citizenry. A national information policy is meant to enhance the information infrastructure, commitment of resources and formulation of associated legislation to develop and maintain a national information system and information services (Uhegbu, 2004).

The researcher then asked those who said ‘no’ to explain why they thought libraries were not facilitating access to information in Malawi and those who said ‘yes’ with reservations to explain why the reservations. They argued that libraries were faced with a number of challenges which included: inadequate information resources, financial and human resources; inadequate number of libraries; under-qualified personnel; lack of marketing skills among librarians; lack of a reading culture; poor management of
information; inadequate provision of Internet services and; legislation restricting access
to information. These themes are expounded on in the sections which follow hereunder.

4.3.4.1 **Inadequate information, human and financial resources**

In-depth interviews revealed that 17 (48.6%) of the respondents who said ‘yes’ with
reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to information in Malawi observed
that libraries were often under-resourced in terms of information, human and financial
resources. They argued that libraries often contain irrelevant stock, outdated
information, mostly in English with very little local content. The researcher also
observed that the libraries he visited maintained small collections of local content as
compared to the general collection. The situation was dire in government libraries apart
from the National Archives of Malawi probably because of the nature of its mandate (Cf
1.4.1.3). Yet government is considered to be the biggest producer and consumer of
information in a country (Fitzgerald, 2010; Muir and Oppenheim, 2002). The Malawiana
collection at Malawi Human Rights Commission library for instance, was very small; it
only had 60 volumes while the general collection had about 4000 volumes. The National
Archives of Malawi in the legal deposit library had close to 20,000 volumes of
accessioned publications on Malawi and another 30,000 volumes waiting to be
accessioned comprising publications from Malawi and neighbouring countries like
Zambia and Tanzania. University libraries and the Malawi National Library Service
maintained considerable sizes of the Malawiana collection. The Malawiana collection in
the university libraries mainly comprised dissertations and theses of students who
graduated from the universities. For instance at KCN a librarian indicated that there
were about 2000 volumes in the Malawiana collection and about 25000 volumes in the
general collection, the College Librarian at Polytechnic indicated that there were 756 volumes in the Malawiana collection and 98000 volumes in the general collection, a librarian at NLS said that there were about 27000 volumes in the Malawiana collection and 937000 volumes in the general collection. A librarian at Mzuzu University indicated that there were about 8000 volumes in the Malawiana collection and 39760 volumes in the general collection. Library collections in all the 6 libraries largely comprised foreign publications and were in English. The findings suggest that there is little emphasis on developing collections of local content in libraries in Malawi. Consequently, most of the local information resources are not readily available in the libraries.

The respondents also observed that most researchers are not keen to place copies of their research works with libraries and oftentimes one has to search for such information beyond libraries like on the Internet, from researchers themselves and research institutions. They further observed the need for a policy on intellectual property since the concept of IPR in Malawi is not well understood and has resulted in innovators being reluctant to share information. They also noted that most libraries, particularly in government departments and private institutions operate without a budget line or inadequate financial resources to support their services. Libraries are run by under-qualified personnel and in some cases with people without any professional qualification to render effective services.

They also felt that librarians in Malawi are not well recognised as other professionals in the information sector particularly in government and they are not well-placed to push for policy development. Respondents explained:
“Libraries in Malawi are not an option for a serious researcher who is looking for up to date information. One has to look for alternative sources”. Respondent# PM 01

“Most government departments and institutions do not have functional libraries and positions for librarians. The whole civil service has got only 37 positions catering for library assistants to Chief librarians. Most of the positions are for library assistants who are just certificate holders and only two are for Chief librarians and are not placed in the central government office as a result of which librarians are not well-placed to champion the development of national information policies. The ICT people have a parent Ministry and are well organized through the Ministry of Information while librarians do not have an umbrella Ministry. ICT people are more recognised than librarians and yet it is a recent profession compared to librarianship”. Respondent # ISP 05

“We do not have adequate resources to offer the required services or even train our members of staff. We have a number of them with just certificate and diploma qualifications which may not be recognized as basic professional qualifications. We should have sent them to Mzuzu University for a Bachelor’s degree but we can’t.” Respondent # IS 06

Information sourced from MALICO indicated that a number of libraries in Malawi, particularly academic libraries have been able to access e-resources from international journals through the consortium. Members have had to contribute towards subscription of electronic journal titles although MALICO acknowledged that it has not been easy to solicit contributions and has also not been possible to subscribe to all required titles because of financial constraints libraries were experiencing.

The results suggest that funding for purchasing or subscribing to publications is often inadequate, consequently libraries do not often stock up-to-date information resources. Libraries in Malawi have therefore come to appreciate the need for cooperative acquisition of information resources particularly e-resources in these hard economic times. They have formed a consortium through which they can subscribe and access some of the e-resources in order to provide users with current information.
The responses further suggest that researchers feel that their intellectual property is not protected in the absence of a policy. Researchers have ended up hoarding their research findings as a result they are not readily found in libraries. IPR has implications on the flow and sharing of information. A national information policy makes provisions for the protection of intellectual property in order to enhance access to information including research information (Arnold, 2002).

The responses also suggested that librarians in Malawi are ill-positioned and lack the influence to initiate policy development in the information sector. In addition, the government does not seem to appreciate the role of librarians in Malawi as evidenced by the lack of a proper career structure for librarians in the civil service. Others like the ICT and Media professions have well laid career structures.

Information sourced from NCST regarding qualifications of personnel in libraries, archives, documentation centers in Malawi as shown in table 4.1 below indicates that two (1%) of the personnel had PhDs in Library and Information Science, 18 (6%) of the personnel had Master’s Degree in Library and Information Science, 16 (5%) of the personnel had Bachelor’s Degree in Library and Information Science, 11 (4%) of the personnel had Bachelor’s Degrees in other disciplines, 2 (1%) of the personnel had Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information studies, 35 (12%) of the personnel had Undergraduate Diploma in Library and Information Science, 16 (6%) of the personnel had Undergraduate Diploma in other disciplines, 90 (31%) of the personnel had MALA Certificate, 85 (29%) of the personnel had Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) an equivalent of O-level, and 16 (5%) of the personnel had Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) which is below O-level.
Table 4.1: Qualifications of personnel in libraries, archives and documentation centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree in Library and information Science</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Science</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree in other disciplines</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Diploma in Library and Information Science</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Diploma in IT</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate diplomas in other disciplines</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALA Certificate</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSCE (O - level)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCE (below O - level)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>293</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCST 2012

The results suggest that government was not fully committed to issues relating to libraries and information services in Malawi in the absence of a policy. Human resource development in this field is quite low. There are limited training opportunities in librarianship resulting in shortage of professional skills. Results also suggest that librarianship may not be among government priority areas of training. Results further show that out of the 293 personnel working in libraries in Malawi there were only 36 (12.3%) professional librarians with a bachelor’s degree and above. A total of 127 (43.3%) of the personnel had either an undergraduate diploma in library and information science or a MALA certificate. This suggests that a considerable number of library personnel in Malawi are not adequately trained. Furthermore there was a significant number 130 (44.4%) of the personnel who do not have any formal qualification in library
and information science. This has adverse implications on the quality and type of information services rendered. The results also suggest that there are no standard qualifications for people to work in libraries in Malawi. People with very low qualifications as low as JCE (below O-level) are being employed or assigned to work as library assistants in libraries in Malawi. In addition, the results suggest that many organisations do not employ or utilize graduates from the School of Library and Information Science at Mzuzu University. Mzuzu University has so far graduated close to 85 (Cf 4.4.1) people in library and information science. One would therefore expect to find more personnel with bachelor’s degree in libraries than is the case. The large presence of under-qualified and unqualified staff may also mean that libraries do not have human resources development plans to train and upgrade their staff. It could also be an indication that libraries lack financial resources to train human resources. The work environment and society is changing rapidly with the advancement in ICTs. Library personnel therefore need to acquire new and sophisticated skills if they are to offer better services to their clients. Training of human resources in libraries is therefore imperative.

4.3.4.2 Inadequate libraries

From the findings 12 (34.3%) of respondents mentioned that there were very few libraries serving a large population and were mostly found in urban areas whilst the majority of the population in Malawi lived in the rural areas. However, there were some initiatives by the National Library Service and international organisations which led to the establishment of a number of rural-based libraries meant to serve rural communities. Respondents further observed that most government schools, both
primary and secondary do not have libraries. They also noted that most of the libraries in Malawi operated without requisite infrastructure in terms of library space for effective information services. Some respondents remarked:

“Libraries serve only a small proportion of the population. There are very few public libraries in the country and are mostly found in urban areas as a result of which most areas don’t have libraries particularly in rural areas. Just check the distribution of libraries established by the Malawi National Library Service. I remember when I was doing my secondary school, we used to have libraries in most secondary schools and even in some primary schools but sadly most of them now particularly in government schools have been closed down. Right now most of the libraries we see in the districts are the ones that were established by NICE although they are also under-resourced and their collection is mostly on governance. Moreover, the libraries are manned by non-librarians”. Respondent # ISP 10

“We also lack space for our users. Just go down stairs and check how full it is. Some of our readers are out there in the lawn. You know what, all the buildings you see us operating from are either a donation or we are renting. We need new spacious structures to accommodate our clients but we cannot build because of lack of funds”. Respondent # IS 06

The responses imply that the government may not have paid much attention to the establishment of more libraries or maintaining the existing ones to match the demand for information services. Libraries are mostly found in urban areas leaving out the rural population. Most of the buildings in which libraries are operating from, particularly in urban areas lack space to accommodate users and were not built to house libraries. Furthermore, most of the schools in Malawi, mainly those belonging to government do not have libraries. Information sourced from the National Library Service (NLS) which provides public library services in Malawi indicates that NLS has established branch libraries in only 11 districts out of a total of 28 districts, 1413 school libraries and 271 rural based libraries across the country. School libraries are run by teacher librarians who were trained by NLS with funding from CODE. NLS has since 1990 trained 1232
teacher librarians (976 men, 256 women). This means that almost every school library that NLS established has a teacher librarian. However, the total number of schools in Malawi in 2010 was 6437 with a total student population of 4.1 million (Malawi Government 2011: 17-18) which means that only 22% of the schools are being served by the National Library Service. Interviews further revealed that the establishment of community and school libraries is dependent on expressed interest and commitment made by schools and communities involved. NLS then provides information resources and training for teacher librarians and volunteers to run community libraries. Information resources mostly come from Book Aid International and CODE. Table 4.2 below, shows school and rural based libraries established by the National library service.

Table 4.2 School and rural based libraries established by NLS by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>School libraries</th>
<th>Rural based public libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Region</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern region</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Region</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1413</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The results indicate that there are regional imbalances in terms of the provision of school and rural-based public libraries in Malawi. For instance, the central region has the largest share of school libraries. This may be an indication that the region has the highest number of schools in Malawi. However, as highlighted earlier, the NLS provides school libraries based on requests from schools. This may mean that schools in Central region made the highest number of requests and were committed to the establishment
of the school libraries. Furthermore, the headquarters of NLS are in Lilongwe which is in the Central region and in terms of logistics, it would be easier and cheaper to establish more school libraries in the region than in the other regions. In terms of rural based public libraries, the Northern region, despite having the lowest population size has the highest number. The population distribution by region shows that 13.1% of the population in Malawi was in the Northern region, 42.1% was in the Central Region and 44.8% was in the Southern Region (NSO, 2008). However, the Northern Region has the highest literacy rate as compared to the other regions. According to NSO (2008) 77% of the people residing in the Northern Region were literate, in Central Region 62% of the population were literate and 62% of the population in the South were literate. This may mean that the demand for information services in the Northern region was higher than in the two regions because of the high literacy levels.

According to Ojanen (2010:online) the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) has over the years also established 23 district resource centres and 154 rural based libraries across the country to promote literacy and to facilitate access to information. Besides establishing libraries, it also established radio clubs to raise awareness of current events among the rural population. NICE was a project funded by EU which started in 1999 with the aim of contributing to the strengthening of the democratic processes and increase good governance in Malawi. However, the project wound up in 2009 and it has transformed into a public trust under the Ministry of Information and Civic Education. It is yet to be seen in the absence of a national information policy, if government will be committed to sustain the existing district resource centres and the
rural based libraries established by NICE and even establish more to reach out to more communities.

4.3.4.3 Lack of a reading culture

In-depth interviews showed that 13 (37.1%) of the respondents felt that libraries in Malawi were only useful to those pursuing studies. The few public libraries available were often used as reading rooms with users in most cases bringing in their own reading materials particularly textbooks. Respondents further remarked that most Malawians do not have a reading culture to access information such that most of the libraries outside the academic circles are underutilized. Some respondents remarked:

“Libraries are mostly useful for academic purposes. These days, libraries are patronized mostly by students who are reading for their examinations. They will be looking for prescribed books or will bring their own. Very few adults visit libraries partly because of unavailability of public Internet services in our libraries.” Respondent # AC 05

“Most people in the country use libraries for academic reasons, not for personal development or general knowledge.” Respondent # ISP 09.

The results suggest that in Malawi, a reading culture may be difficult to develop with students relying on textbooks only for their education. Students need to be exposed to information resources other than the textbooks through the provision of school libraries for them to develop the liking for reading at an early stage. However, school libraries in Malawi are underdeveloped. It therefore becomes difficult to cultivate a reading culture in later stages of life. Furthermore, with the underdeveloped publishing industry it may mean that the low availability of local content affects the reading habits of the people.
Respondents further observed that a reading culture is linked to literacy. According to National Statistics Office (2008) Malawi’s literacy rate stands at 68%. However, many people who graduate from adult literacy classes end up sliding back into illiteracy because of lack of programmes to sustain the acquired literacy (MoEST, no date). The underdeveloped publishing industry may also have contributed to the backsliding of literacy graduates into illiteracy. The availability of local content helps sustain the acquired literacy because people can access cheap and easy to read materials which are produced locally when there is a strong publishing industry. There are over 6000 adult literacy classes every year with an average of 25 learners per class. They are run by government, NGOs and Faith Based Organizations (MoEST, no date). The interviews further revealed that Malawi does not have a national adult literacy policy to date. A draft policy was initiated and submitted to government but has not been approved up to date. The absence of the adult literacy policy affects efforts of reducing illiteracy in Malawi. People who are literate are able to demand for information services. When people are illiterate the appreciation for information is very low and can’t contribute meaningfully to national issues let alone to the development of a national information policy (Uhegbu, 2004).

4.3.4.4 Poor management of information resources

The interviews indicate that 7 (20.0%) of the respondents observed that there is management of information resources in government institutions. A significant amount of information lies in people’s offices as such information is never available in their libraries to facilitate access to information. One respondent remarked:
“Libraries are not vigilant in managing information in government institutions. Most information is lying in offices and is not available in libraries. For example we have problems sourcing information from Ministry of Health which is our parent ministry and to say the least from district hospitals”. Respondent # ISP 04

The findings may mean that information in government organisations is not systematically organised to facilitate access. Government generates and collects a lot of information resources which end up not being optimally utilized due to lack of proper management. In addition, there is a culture of hoarding information resources in people’s offices thus making it very difficult for libraries to organise the generated and collected information for easy and quick retrieval when users need it. The results may also be a reflection of the caliber of staff that is left to manage libraries in government institutions. They may lack the skills to develop systems for collecting and organising such information so that it was readily available to those who needed it.

### 4.3.4.5 Lack of marketing skills among librarians

The findings indicate that 9 (25.7%) of respondents observed that librarians have not done much in marketing library services so that people become aware of the existence of the services and can start using the services. Respondents further observed that libraries were operating in isolation and it was difficult for libraries to share resources for the benefit of users. One respondent remarked:

*People are not aware of which library to contact for what type of information in Malawi. Libraries have not created enough awareness on the services they are offering particularly now when most of them lack resources they need to pool together what is available and establish networks*. Respondent # IU 10

This may be an indication that members of staff in libraries have not acquired the skills to market their information products. Consequently, information resources are not fully
utilised. Users may not be aware of the range of services different libraries offer in Malawi. Librarians therefore need to be re-trained to improve on their marketing skills. In addition, this may also be a reflection of the type of training librarians go through in library schools. The curriculum may be weak in this aspect. The results may also suggest that Malawi does not have an established network of libraries in order to facilitate the free flow and sharing of information resources for the benefit of users.

4.3.4.6 Inadequate provision of Internet services

A total number of 15 (42.9%) of the respondents observed that people are now more attracted to the Internet to access e-resources than the print resources available in libraries which in most cases contain old information. Respondents also argued that libraries were not offering free Internet services in order for users to be patronizing libraries in Malawi. The researcher also observed that some people accessed Internet from offices, Internet cafes, hot spots or cell phones because libraries either had no Internet connectivity or where it was available it was not for free and it was slow. The researcher also observed that the few government libraries that he visited had Internet facilities but were not available to users. The Internet facilities were meant for library staff. For example at NCST library there were two computers with Internet but were meant for the two members of staff in the library and were put in their offices. It was the same case at Malawi Human Rights Commission library and the National Archives of Malawi where there was a computer in each library meant for the librarian and not users. The researcher also observed that university libraries had Internet facilities meant for users particularly students. This was also true for National Library Service. However, the Internet was relatively slow because of the low bandwidth they had
subscribed to. It appears libraries in Malawi cannot afford fast Internet services because of high costs of bandwidth. A librarian at KCN confirmed that Internet becomes very slow in the afternoon when there is high traffic. Furthermore, Internet facilities were inadequate with very few computers available to users. For instance at Polytechnic library there were 35 computers against a student population of 3250 although there was also Wi-Fi in the library which students with laptops could use, KCN had 20 computers against a student population of 729, Mzuzu University had 16 computers (nine were down) against a student population of about 1982 and National Library Service had only four computers for the public. Users were also required to pay a fee which was charged either per minute or hour in Malawi Kwacha. The NLS was charging Five Kwacha per minute; Polytechnic Library was charging 30 Kwacha per hour, Mzuzu University Library was charging K50 per hour, and KCN Library was previously charging K30 per hour but it was now offering free Internet services to students working on school assignments. The researcher also noticed that currently there is no policy to promote the development and use of ICTs in libraries in Malawi. Since libraries were not offering fast and free Internet services to users, they were not attracting many users except in academic libraries where students had no option. One respondent remarked:

“People nowadays don’t appreciate the role of libraries with the coming of the Internet. People opt for e-resources than the print resources found in libraries which are often old. They would probably be attracted if our libraries were offering free and good Internet services”. Respondent # RES 06

The results suggest that people in Malawi are no longer relying on library stock which is often outdated and users don’t find it to be very relevant to their information needs. Advancements in ICTs particularly the Internet offer Malawians alternative sources of up-to-date information despite the inadequacy and quality of the Internet services.
People can also access Internet from their offices, Internet cafes, and hotspots or on cell phones though it is the privileged few. The results also suggest that libraries in Malawi do not offer free Internet services to users. This may be an indication of the high cost of maintaining Internet services in Malawi and an underdeveloped ICT infrastructure which is not universally available. Furthermore, the results suggest that there is no policy to guide the development and use of ICTs in libraries in Malawi. Libraries in Malawi may therefore be contributing to the digital divide to those who can’t afford to pay for the service.

4.3.4.7 Legislation restricting access to information

From the findings 8 (22.9%) of respondents noted that libraries are affected by legislation such as copyright law, censorship and national archives of Malawi legislation. A number of pieces of legislation were observed to be restricting access to information and use. Respondents noted that the introduction of licensing fee by the Copyright Association of Malawi on photocopying services in libraries is a deterrent to access to information particularly in academic institutions. Some respondents felt the fee was on the higher side than it should have been. They also said that this is against the principle of fair use which the copyright law advocates for academic institutions. Respondents also noted that censorship laws affected library services where publications which were deemed not fit for the public were banned. Such materials had to be removed from the libraries. However, respondents acknowledged that this was a big challenge during the one party era. Respondents also observed that the National Archives Act (Chap. 28:01) of the laws of Malawi puts restrictions on access to national archives for a longer period than neighbouring countries and the provision was not consistent with the current
trends. Respondents attributed these challenges to the absence of a national information policy which would address issues relating to libraries, archives and documentation services. Three respondents remarked:

“We need to relook at our laws. Some of them are restricting access to information in libraries. Laws like copyright especially now that we are paying a license fee. Why should we be paying a license fee to photocopy and yet we are an academic institution. The fee also looks to be on the higher side. All along we have not been paying for photocopying using the same law why now”. Respondent # ISP 08

“During the one party era in Malawi, censorship was a problem. Government used to ban a lot of publications and because of that, we couldn't keep them in our libraries”. Respondent # ISP 05

“We need to review most of our legislation regarding information services for instance here in Malawi we are still using the 30 year rule to access information in the archives while most of the SADC countries are using the 20 year rule. So we need the review of the existing legislation to be in line with current trends...Some of these challenges are there because we don’t have a policy relating to libraries, archives and documentation services”. Respondent # ISP01.

The responses suggest that library and information services operated within the confines of existing legislation related to information services in Malawi. Legislation may promote or restrict the provision of library and information services. In the case of Malawi, there a number of pieces of legislation which affect the flow and sharing of information and in the end affect the provision of library and information services. Legislation such as the Censorship Act of 1968, Copyright Act of 1989 and the National Archives of Malawi Act (Chap 28:01) of the laws of Malawi are some of the pieces of legislation that were limiting the provision of library and information services. The results further suggest that a number of pieces of legislation related to information services in Malawi were old and may not be in line with the current trends. They need to be revised. The development of a national information policy would necessitate enactment and review of associated legislation to enhance access to information (Uhegbu, 2004).
4.3.5 Perceived challenges to access to information in Malawi

Access to information is beset with a number of challenges which hamper the sharing of information in a society. Hamilton and Pors (2003:415) observe that barriers to access to information impede the flow of information and diffusion of ICTs to the majority of the population. Respondents were then asked to indicate what they considered to be challenges to access to information in Malawi. They were provided with a list of challenges and were requested to select as many impediments as would apply. The list included: inadequate information infrastructure, lack of policies promoting access to information, low information literacy, low literacy levels, inadequate competencies in ICTs, poor attitude of policy makers towards information, information hoarding, lack of local content, electricity supply problems, multiplicity of languages and cultural barriers. Respondents added high cost of information and ICTs, political interference and poor information management under the provision of the ‘Any other’ category. The in-depth interviews revealed that 71 (86.6%) of the respondents indicated inadequate information infrastructure, 66 (80.5%) of the respondents said lack of policies promoting access to information, 63 (76.8%) of the respondents said low information literacy, 61 (74.4%) responses indicated low literacy levels, 55 (67.1%) of the respondents indicated inadequate competencies in ICTs, 49 (59.8%) of the respondents mentioned poor attitude of policy makers towards information, 47 (57.3%) of the respondents indicated information hoarding, 42 (51.2%) of the respondents said lack of local content, 36 (43.9%) of the respondents mentioned electricity supply problems, 20 (24.4%) of the respondents mentioned multiplicity of languages, 16 (19.5%) of the respondents said cultural barriers, 2 (2.4%) of the respondents indicated political interference, 1 (1.3%) of
the respondents indicated high cost of information and ICTs and, 1 (1.32) of the respondents indicated poor information management. Table 4.3 below describes the results of the responses in order of their frequencies, starting with the highest.

Table 4.3: Perceived challenges to access to information in Malawi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges to access to information in Malawi</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate information infrastructure</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of policies promoting access to information</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low information literacy</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low literacy levels</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate competencies in ICTs</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attitude of policy makers towards information</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information hoarding</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of local content</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity supply problems</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicity of languages</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural barriers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cost of information and ICTs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor information management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that the largest proportion (86.6%) of the respondents mentioned inadequate information infrastructure as the major challenge to access to information.

According to information sourced from MACRA, in 2010 the penetration rate of the fixed lines was at 1.2% (Malawi’s population was 13.5 million) translating into 160,108 subscribers, the penetration rate for mobile phones was at 23.1% which meant 3.0
million subscribers and the Internet was at 2.3% translating into 305,000 users. Malawi was using Vsat for local and international Internet connectivity which is expensive and slow because of limited bandwidth. However an interview with Malawi Sustainable Development Network Programme (SDNP) (2012) indicated that optic fibre cable network backbone is now available in major cities of Blantyre, Zomba and Lilongwe, Mzuzu and in a few districts along the MI road connecting these cities with a loop going through Salima. Local optic fibre network was being provided by MTL and ESCOM. The MTL network became operational for public use later in 2009 and ESCOM's optic fibre network became operational for public use in the last quarter of 2011. Most of the ISPs have migrated from Vsat to optic fibre cable network and were using the Vsat as a backup. However optic fibre coverage and usage is still limited. The network is yet to be rolled out to most parts of the country because of the huge financial investment required. The cost of connectivity is still high as a result of which it is not being utilized to its full potential. Currently only 25% of the bandwidth is being utilized (MACRA, 2011: 18). The interviews also revealed that the cost of Internet connectivity remained high in Malawi because investors are also trying to make a profit out of the new investment. Malawi is connected to the optic fibre network through Mozambique and Tanzania. Some respondents felt that the high cost of connectivity is due to lack of a national information policy to address ICT issues.

The results suggested that the information infrastructure in Malawi (libraries and ICTs) is not universally available. Inadequate information infrastructure gives rise to problems of information flow and sharing. The results also seem to suggest that the information infrastructure is to a larger extent available in urban areas leaving out most parts of the
rural areas. This disadvantages the rural communities who end up having limited or no access to essential information. It is estimated that 85% of the population in Malawi resides in rural areas (NSO, 2008) and is therefore denied free access to information and ICTs. The results also indicate that digital divide exists in Malawi where a small proportion of the population based on geographical location has access to the information infrastructure. Malawi may not have invested much in information infrastructure to make it universally available and consequently enhance the flow and sharing of information. Uhegbu (2004:42) contends ‘for any country to have a balanced flow of information and development of its information infrastructure, a national information policy is imperative’. A national information policy will therefore play a major role in the development of ICTs as well as library infrastructure and information services in Malawi.

4.4 Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy

A National information policy ensures better coordination and cooperation between information systems and services. However, Malawi does not have an overall information policy up to now. On the other hand Malawi has developed some information policies at sectoral level. For instance the communications sector developed a communications policy in 1998, a rural telecommunications policy in 2002 and the communication Act in 1998. The approach as noted by Rowland (1996) to the development of policies will differ from country to country depending on varying levels of economic development and historical context. This section therefore, looks at motivation
for sectoral information policy development in Malawi and factors preventing the development of an overarching national information policy.

4.4.1 Motivation to develop information policy in Malawi

There are several factors that will prompt the development of information policies depending on the socio-economic development of a country (Rowland 1996). The researcher then asked respondents to indicate the reasons behind the development of information policies in Malawi. The researcher provided a list of what would prompt policy formulation and they were requested to choose as many options as would apply. The list of options included: easy access to information, regulation of what kind of information may be accessed by who, regulation on when information may be accessed, technology advancements, international trends, international conventions and treaties, legal events, development of new applications or systems, information market forces, harmonisation of services, public interests. The discussions with the respondents revealed that 53 (65.4%) of the respondents mentioned technology advancements, 52 (64.2%) of the respondents mentioned regulation of what kind of information may be accessed by who, 48 (59.3%) of the respondents mentioned international trends, 45 (55.6%) of the respondents mentioned international conventions and treaties, 40 (49.4%) of the respondents mentioned public interests, 38 (46.9%) of the respondents indicated easy access to information, 38 (46.9%) of the respondents mentioned information market forces, 34 (42.0%) of the respondents indicated development of new applications or systems, 32 (39.5%) of the respondents mentioned legal events, 32 (39.5%) of the respondents mentioned harmonization of services, 30 (37.0%) of the respondents mentioned regulation on when information may be
accessed and 1(1.2%) of the respondents mentioned other policies. The results are shown in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Issues motivating information policy development in Malawi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues motivating information policy development in Malawi</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology advancements</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation of the kind of information which may be accessed by who</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International trends</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International conventions and treaties</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public interests</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy access to information</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information market forces</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of new applications or systems</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal events</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonization of services</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation on when information may be accessed</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other policies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results suggest that policy development in Malawi is largely driven by technological advancements. Technological advancements have brought a shift in many governments’ thinking towards a national information policy including Malawi. The attention has been shifted from information to information technology. The development of the global information infrastructure demands that countries need to upgrade their national information infrastructure to the level of the global network so that they can effectively participate and benefit from the global network. This calls for the
development of national information policies which are biased towards ICTs to address the requirements (Whalen, 1994).

4.4.2 Factors preventing the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi

The development of an overarching national information policy is a world phenomenon. The researcher asked the respondents why they thought Malawi has not developed an overarching national information policy. Respondents cited lack of an institutional framework to direct policy development in the sector, lack of financial and technical capacity to drive the development process, lack of sustained political will to have such a policy, political history of the country, the level of economic development, existence of overarching government development plans, international trends, and diverse nature of the information sector. These themes are expounded in the sections which follow hereunder.

4.4.2.1 Weak institutional framework

The findings show that 47 (58.8%) of the respondents felt that the information sector lacked strong leadership to provide strategic direction at national level. The Ministry of Information is not proactive enough to promote issues of information services in Malawi consequently there is no champion to take up the process of developing the policy. The respondents also felt that the ministry is prone to political interference. For instance government in 2011 reviewed Section 46 of the Penal Code to give the Minister of Information powers to regulate publications. This was meant to target publications with dissenting views. It was further observed that coordination is a problem in the sector
and sectors have ended up working in isolation. Respondents expressed the need for a coordinating institution to spearhead the development of policies. Respondents also mentioned that Malawi has a weak monitoring and evaluation system to identify areas requiring policy intervention.

Five respondents remarked:

“We don’t have a national coordinating body to provide leadership in the sector, hence different sectors are absorbed with sectoral issues. There is also lack of collaboration among sectors in the information industry”. Respondent # PM 04

“The Ministry of information and civic education which is supposed to coordinate the development of information policies in the sector has abrogated its responsibility and is sucked up in politics”. Respondent # AC 09

“Government has not brought together all players in the information sector and as a result, sectors are working in isolation in the absence of a coordinating institution in the information sector at national level…sectors in Malawi are operating in isolation and only think as a sector to develop their own policy to advance their mandate and interest in the sector”. Respondent # IU 02

“We have very active coordinating bodies and leadership at sectoral level to drive policy formulation in their sectors, a thing missing at national level”. Respondent # PM 01”. 

“We have a very weak monitoring and evaluation system in the country as a result of which there is a problem in monitoring information issues in Malawi and it also becomes a problem to identify issues requiring policy intervention like an overarching information policy”. Respondent # IU 12

The results seem to suggest that information is a crosscutting issue requiring an integrated approach in order to deal with national and sectoral priorities. An institution is required to bring together all stakeholders in the information sector so that they work in harmony to avoid overlaps and contradictions. Coordination of information policies need to be centralized and implementation decentralized for things to work smoothly. The results also seem to suggest that Malawi does not have proper systems of identifying gaps that may require policy intervention. This may also be an indication of lack of expertise among Malawians in coming up with such systems.
The respondents felt that the weak institutional framework led to the development of sectoral policies because sectors took their own initiatives to develop sector related information policies. Although respondents noted that the problem with such information policies emanating from sectoral levels first is that they become more restrictive than enabling because they may lack national direction. Two respondents remarked:

“Lack of…an overarching policy necessitates that sectors formulate their own sectoral policies to fill the vacuum created by the absence of an overarching policy”. Respondent # IU 06

“As a nation we don’t have the vision to develop the overarching policy as a result of which sectors are developing their own policies to guide development at sectoral level”. Respondent # IU 05

The responses seem to indicate that the development of sectoral information policies in Malawi was as a result of the absence of an overarching information policy framework which would have taken care of the entire sector. Sectors are therefore developing sector specific information policies to safeguard their interests. However, the pluralistic approach to the development of sectoral information policies requires that proper systems are put in place so that these sectoral policies are more complementary than contradictory. The researcher then asked respondents if there were any mechanisms of ensuring that these sectoral information policies are in harmony to avoid contradictions or duplications. Respondents felt that stakeholder consultations which are done when developing policies were an inherent mechanism of harmonizing sectoral policies if they are comprehensive enough. Although in most cases government has developed a central policy to harmonize all other sectoral policies so that for all related sectors there is an overarching policy to guide the sectors. Policy development initiatives procedurally involve the responsible or line government ministry which ensures harmony of sectoral policies. Respondents also mentioned that government established a policy division in
the Office of the President and Cabinet to guide ministries in developing policies and that all policies should be submitted through this office before going to cabinet for approval. However, most of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of any mechanisms that were put in place. Three respondents said:

“There are no mechanisms that I know of. We need an overarching policy which will guide sectoral policy formulation. Sectoral policies need to come from the overall policy and should be addressing issues in the overarching policy and this will bring harmony among sectoral policies because each sector will know its sphere of operation.” Respondent # LEG 01

“In the office of the President and Cabinet there is a Unit responsible for the development of different policies”. Respondent # IU 03

“We need a formalized system of sharing information at sectoral level and public awareness on the available policies in the information sector...we need a platform to share policy information...we need a place where all policies will converge for discussion”. Respondent # RES 09

The results seem to indicate that policy development in the information sector in Malawi was not systematic. Each sector is pursuing the developing of its sectoral information policy without a national information policy framework to guide them. Furthermore there are no proper coordinating mechanisms in place. The problem with this approach is that it breeds overlaps and contradictions in the policies. The ideal case would have been to have an overarching information policy framework which would guide the development of sectoral information policies. This would minimize overlaps and contradictions and would also address the problem of institutional arrangement where sectors or stakeholders would be assigned responsibilities.
4.4.2.2 Lack of finances and technical capacity

The findings showed that 14 (17.5%) of the respondents noted that Malawi did not have the financial capacity as well as expertise to drive the process of developing an overall national information policy. They observed that Malawi always relies on donors in terms of financial resources and technical assistance when it comes to policy development. They felt that Malawi needs to develop her own policies that are relevant to the needs of the country using own resources. They believed that it was time Malawi stopped relying on donor support to develop her policies in the information sector by developing local capacity in policy analysis. They also felt that the continued reliance on donors to drive and fund the policy development process demonstrated some lack of ownership of the initiatives and responsibility on the part of government to take up issues of policy development in Malawi. The researcher indeed observed that policies developed so far in the information sector were all developed through donor funds and international expertise. For instance, the Communication Policy of 1998, the Rural Telecommunication Policy of 2002 and the Draft ICT policy. The Office of the President and Cabinet (2011) also acknowledges the challenge of limited financial and human resources for policy development in Malawi. Two respondents remarked:

"Government should be committed to the development and implementation of policies and that we need home grown policies driven by Malawians, and supported by Malawian resources". Respondent # LE 01

"We don't have capacity because there are very few trained people who can drive the process of a national information policy". Respondent # IS 04

The responses suggest that Malawi government may not have committed itself to the development of policies in the information sector. Development partners have been
behind the development of policies in the information sector in terms of providing the finances and expertise to drive the processes. The responses also suggest that Malawi may not afford to devote own financial resources for the development of policies in the sector. Furthermore the country lacks expertise in the area of policy development. It therefore becomes difficult to initiate national information policy development process when there are no committed financial resources and expertise around.

4.4.2.3 Lack of sustained political will

The in-depth interviews revealed that 55 (68.8%) of the respondents felt that there was lack of sustained political will and commitment on the part of policy makers because they view liberalized access to information as a threat to their political clout. Running government is perceived as ‘secret business in Malawi’. Government is reluctant to give out more information to empower the citizenry for fear of being taken to task on some of the policies government is pursuing. They noted that other policies and laws viewed to work to the advantage of government have been fast-tracked and they are operational now. There was also a notion among respondents that some policy makers do not understand the concept of a national information policy as a result of which it is difficult for them to push for such a policy. Respondents also noted that government bureaucracy affects the development of policies as it contributes to delays in some of the initiatives. Some respondents stated:

“Most of our politicians starting from Members of Parliament to cabinet ministers are not well-read and because of that they always quickly approve policies and laws that are in favour of government but which are not helpful enough in the information sector. Education requirements for our politicians who wish to be elected as Members of Parliament should be raised from the current Junior Certificate to probably a degree so that we have a reading and knowledgeable parliament able to pass only useful policies and laws for the information sector. In Malawi we also have the tendency of entrusting crucial issues to people who do not understand them just because of political inclination”. Respondent # IS 10
“There are a number of policies that have been developed but are yet to be approved. The ICT policy and Access to Information Bill for example were developed over five years ago but they are yet to be approved. Technocrats may be committed and may do their work but when it reaches policy makers there are so many delays and technocrats have no powers to push policies through at that level”. Respondent # IS 06

“As a country probably we don’t want to open up…we don’t want to be transparent particularly political leaders…the fear of the unknown and putting up such a policy authorities feel insecure”. Respondent ISP # 05

“Bureaucracy derails a lot of initiatives in Malawi. Once an initiative starts it takes long to be approved by government”. Respondent # RES 01

The responses may mean that Malawi needs a cadre of well trained and knowledgeable politicians who can be entrusted with the initiation and approval of relevant policies in the information sector. The current trend is that policy-makers support the formulation of policies that will enable them consolidate their power and make them remain in government. Anything that threatens their stay in government will be quickly frustrated. The responses also suggest that bureaucracy derails a lot of policy initiatives in Malawi. Policy development processes are very structured as a result policies take a long time to finalise and to get approved by government. Some policy initiatives like the ICT policy and the Access to Information Bill have stalled for more than five years now. This has implications on the development of a national information policy.

Respondents further observed that the political history of Malawi contributed to the absence of an overarching national information policy. They noted that the country is coming from a very autocratic government system where access to information was heavily regulated with a culture of suspicion and reprisal as a result of which Malawi has not had much debate on a national information policy. Talking of a national information policy that would democratize access to information then would have been tantamount to treason. Meaningful debate on information issues only started with the advent of
democracy in the country in 1994. Freedom of speech and access to information now had constitutional provisions in Article 35 and Article 37 respectively in the 1994 constitution of Malawi. Although it seems like there is still lack of a champion to lead the debate. Three respondents said:

“We should not forget that we have had an oppressive government for a very long time where access to information was seriously regulated so much so that the issue of a national information policy in its current understanding would not have arisen”. Respondent # RES 03

“When we became a democracy we wanted to copy a lot of things from other democratic nations…we are still grappling with those issues and our minds have been overwhelmed with the emerging issues. We have not had time to concentrate on the overall national information policy”. Respondent # ISP 08

“Government structure has not included an information scientist at the highest policy making position who understands and articulates information issues well and who could be able to advise government and push for the development of an overall information policy and sectoral policies in the information sector”. Respondent # IU 08

The results seem to suggest that the free flow and sharing of information is associated with democracy. Authoritarian regimes like what Malawi experienced for 30 years up to 1994 have little or no interest in national information policies unless the policies serve the interests of the regime. The responses further suggest that Malawi needed an information scientists at high policy level to advise government on information issues and on the need to develop a national information policy.

The respondents also observed that policy makers seem not to understand the concept of a national information policy and information seemed not to be a priority on the national development agenda. In addition, professionals in the information sector also lack commitment and have had no interest to pursue the development of such a policy.
Two respondents remarked:

“People in authority or those that can bring policy changes like information professionals have not shown any interest in such a policy perhaps for fear of reprisals from higher authorities in government since one would be seen to want to expose government because the policy would open up information dissemination and sharing”. Respondent# ISP 07

“A national information policy has never been on the agenda of government because of lack of understanding of what the policy is all about while at sectoral level, sectors have gone ahead to identify gaps in their sectors requiring policy intervention”. Respondent # IU 01

The results seem to suggest that no one among policy makers including information professionals has had the initiative to kick start debate on national information policy. The problem may also be that most positions at policy making level are filled through political appointments. Policy makers would therefore not initiate policies that would be perceived to work against the very government that appointed them into the positions. In addition, information professionals may also have been quiet because of the ‘hostile’ politically environment they were working in. The results further suggest that there may be limited understanding among policy makers on the concept of a national information policy as a result they may not have seen the need for such a policy. The policy may have been seen as one that would open up access to government information at the expense of their political clout. Browne (1996) observes that the understanding people have on the concept of a policy has an effect on the type of a policy they develop.

4.4.2.4 Level of economic development

The findings revealed that 18 (22.5%) of the respondents felt that the level of economic development of a country dictates policies to be put in place. They observed that Malawi is still lagging behind in many sectors. It is not moving at the same pace with the rest of the world due to social economic problems the country is experiencing. The country is
pre-occupied with problems related to agriculture and food security, environmental management, HIV and AIDS and other health problems. Malawi has therefore, not reached a level of development to justify the need for such a policy. There are still low levels of information literacy, low application of information and inadequate infrastructure to support information access and utilization among others. Four respondents remarked;

“Our level and pace of development is still low compared to other countries as a result of which this policy is not a priority…the level of development of a country dictates policies that will be put in place. Malawi is not all that developed to warrant such a policy. We are still grappling with abject poverty”. Respondent # ISP 06

“We are coming from very low information literacy and functional literacy levels as a result of which there has been little appreciation for information to have an overarching national information policy”. Respondent # AC 07

“We also lack the information infrastructure to enable the development of such an umbrella policy.” Respondent # IU 05

“We have more pressing needs as a nation such as hunger, diseases, education, and HIV and AIDS than invest in information”. Respondent # ISP 05

The responses seem to suggest that Malawi as an underdeveloped country experiences numerous social problems and has ended up relegating information issues. Malawi may therefore be preoccupied with problems such as food security, HIV and AIDS, and environmental degradation than pay attention to information issues. The responses also seem to indicate that an underdeveloped information infrastructure may not influence the development of a national information policy. The argument is probably that a developed information infrastructure is likely to prompt the development of a national information policy so that it guides its operations (Ayoo and Otike, 2002) unlike when it is underdeveloped. Conversely an underdeveloped information infrastructure can prompt the development of a national information policy in order to guide the growth of
the information infrastructure. The responses further seem to suggest that society with low literacy levels like in Malawi where literacy rate stands at 68% (NSO, 2008) cannot advocate meaningfully for the development of a national information policy.

4.4.2.6 Existence of overarching government development plans

The results indicated that 12 (18%) of the respondents observed that the absence of the policy may be attributed to the existence of other government overarching development plans. Government in Malawi besides sector policies has developed an overall national development plan which sets the development agenda for the country to be pursued during the period that government is in power. It spells out priority areas government has to focus on and sectors are therefore required to draw their priorities from such development plans. Information has not been a priority in these development plans. These plans have also come along with the restructuring of government ministries and departments to re-align government programmes. Two respondents remarked:

“Sectors are supposed to draw their policy priorities from the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy which is an overarching national development plans and also the Constitution which provides for the right to access information and probably there may not be any need for an overarching national information policy”. Respondent # PM 09

“Government’s restructuring which result in ministries and departments changing structure and mandate, and staff particularly policy makers following government development plans have also contributed to the non-development of such a policy. These changes also bring in changes in policy focus, and continuation of programmes”. Respondent # IS 12

The response seems to indicate that government development plans in Malawi form the basis of all sectoral policies. Information may not have been included in government development plans as a result it was not regarded as a priority area. For instance the Malawi Congress Party led government had the Statement of Development Policies
from 1971 to 1996, the United Democratic Front led government had the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) from 2002 to 2006 and the Democratic Progressive Party led government put up the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) in 2006 which is being used up to now. These plans particularly the MPRSP and MGDS included ICTs although not among the top priorities.

4.4.2.7 International trends

Some of the respondents 20 (25%) observed that as a country, Malawi is party or a signatory to international agreements and as such, it becomes imperative to develop related sectoral policies for her participation in those agreements at international level. Furthermore, interests of development partners have a big influence on national policies in developing countries like Malawi. Development initiatives are often dependent on donor requirements or conditions. Assistance in a particular sector may require developing a related sectoral policy first. As a benefiting country there is no option but to comply with the requirement. Sectors may also be driven by influences from related sectors at international level and may source funding for a specific sectoral policy. Two respondents said:

“We want to comply with international treaties and conventions that we have signed or accented to, so that we are able to participate in their programmes at international level”. Respondent # PM 06

“We sectors are obliged to abide by agreements which they make with donors to have policies before they can access funds”. Respondent # RES 04

The responses may mean that international agreements, treaties and conventions form the basis of national policies and laws. These international agreements, treaties and conventions are meant to harmonise national policies or laws among countries in order
to standardise and have a common understanding and application (Abdulla, 2008). Malawi is therefore required to align its policies to these international agreements, treaties and conventions. Some of the international agreements that Malawi signed include:

- The SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport. The principal aim of the Protocol in relation to the area of information is to develop and implement policies and programmes that would promote the citizens’ right of access to information (DST, 2009)
- The NEPAD Protocol on the ICT Broadband Infrastructure Network for optic fibre network connections which seeks to ensure provision of economical and efficient information and communication services (Bichler, 2008: 195)
- International copyright agreements which are aimed at protecting intellectual and industrial property like the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, Universal Copyright Convention (UCC) and Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) (DST, 2009)
- The UN Convention on International Exchange of Publications which is aimed at the exchange of official publications and government documents between member states (UNESCO, 2012b:online).

Respondents felt that there has been no obligation at international level or demands from lobbying groups to develop a national information policy. Furthermore the development of policies in Malawi is not systematic, hence the piecemeal approach. Policy is developed as a reaction to a problem and in this case, there may not have been a problem requiring development of such a policy. In addition, respondents felt
that sectoral policies are probably working well and there is no urgency for the country to develop a national information policy. However, there is need to determine if the sectoral policies are indeed working. Three respondents remarked:

“We have a tendency in Malawi of developing reactive policies where we want to respond to a situation or problem, hence the piece meal approach and therefore we may not have envisaged or encountered a problem requiring an overarching national information policy.” Respondent # IS 03

“Currently, there is no need for such a policy since there is no current relevant evidence for the need of such a policy”. Respondent# IS 09

“What is it that Malawi is missing without a national information policy but with sectoral policies in place? You may probably discover that we only need sectoral policies. We are not supposed to develop a national information policy just because others are doing it elsewhere. We need a policy or policies that will address our local needs”. Respondent # ISP 09

The responses seem to suggest that policy development in Malawi is prompted either by an obligation at international level or a problem the country may be facing. Malawi therefore may not have experienced any pressure from the international level or a problem requiring the intervention of a national information policy. Furthermore there may be need for evidence to show that Malawi needs such a policy in the absence of a perceived problem or obligation. However, the need has been felt at sectoral level hence the development of sector specific information policies. In addition sectoral policies may probably be working well in addressing the local needs.

Respondents also noted that the current trend indicate that development partners are channeling their support to the development of sectoral policies. These development partners are presently interested in sectors that are promoting the use of information such as the media and the ICT sector. One respondent said:
“UNESCO, like other international organisations is now more interested in sectoral information policies than a national information policy. The focus currently is on sectors that are promoting the use of information and not the generation of information. Government also seems to have adopted the same approach to focus on sectors and is developing sectoral policies than an overarching policy”. Respondent # IU 02

The findings seem to suggest that development partners dictate policy direction in the information sector in Malawi. Malawi is therefore required to align its policies to the priority areas identified by development partners if they are to get any assistance. However, international organisations like UNESCO have for a long time advocated and supported the development of national information policies. It appears the focus has now changed probably because of the emergence of information societies where emphasis is on ICTs.

4.4.2.8 Diverse nature of the information sector

A number of respondents 49 (61.2%) acknowledged that the information sector is quite diverse and it would be a challenging task to develop an overall national information policy. They observed that there are sectoral information policy initiatives which started some time in 2003 and are yet to be finalized and wondered how long the overall policy would take. In the absence of such a policy, sectors resorted to the development of sectoral policies to keep pace with new trends. They observed that each sector has its own needs and as such sectoral policies address specific needs of a sector in more detail, which may be overlooked or missed out in an overarching policy. Each sector also wants visibility which may be shadowed if the sector is considered under an overall policy. Moreover issues are better articulated and monitored at sectoral level than in an overall policy. They believed that people contribute better at a level they understand very well and have that sense of ownership at sectoral level. Sectors are also
developing at a different pace and level and this is why each sector is developing its own policy when the sector identifies the need. Three respondents said:

“National frameworks most of the times take long to develop as a result of which sectors will develop sectoral policies to keep pace with developments in their sectors rather than wait for an overall framework which takes time to be developed. Moreover the information sector is quite diverse and to cope up with an overarching information policy might be a complex and time consuming task.” Respondent # IU 09

“The information sector is so dynamic and diverse that having an overarching policy which is all-encompassing would be a big challenge and by the time the policy will be in place, a lot of issues will need reviewing because of the long time it would take to develop. For instance the process of developing an ICT policy for Malawi started way back in 2003 and up to now (2011), we just have a draft policy. How long then would this policy take to develop?” Respondent # ISP 02

“The development of an overarching information policy is a long and complex process requiring a lot of resources to develop in terms of time, finances and human resources. The policy would also be huge and difficult to implement”. Respondent # ISP 09

The responses also seem to suggest that the issue of resources be it human, financial and time are only applicable to a national information policy. However, the development of any national policy follows a structured process which requires considerable government commitment in terms of the aforementioned resources (Ayoo and Otike, 2002). Furthermore, the sectoral policy approach may even be more costly as it may require more resources in terms of time, human resources and finances to develop all the sectoral policies in the information sector. Whalen (1994) argues that if the concern is the diverse nature of the information sector in coming up with a national information policy then the same concern should be raised because of the number of sectoral policies that will need to be developed to cover the entire sector. This piece meal approach may also have contributed to some sectors not having sectoral information
policies. An overarching national information policy would have covered all sectors as an umbrella policy.

The respondents also felt that sectoral policies once developed would feed into or inform an overarching policy since sectoral policies would have been tested to see if they are working before developing an overarching information policy. Lessons learnt from the sectoral policies would inform the development on an overarching national information policy and its implementation. Two respondents remarked:

“Starting with an overarching policy may have adverse effects on sectors if the overall policy does not work. We need to develop sector policies first to see if they will work and then move to the overarching policy”. Respondent # IS 05

“Some sectors do not have individual policies as a result it is difficult to come up with an overall policy since the overall policy is supposed to be derived from sectoral policies.”Respondent # RES 06

The results seem to suggest that Malawi needs to develop sectoral information policies first which would then inform the development of an overarching national information policy. However the researcher feels that the logical approach would be to develop an overarching national information policy which would inform the development of sectoral information policies. The overarching national information policy would provide a framework for the development of sectoral policies. This would also harmonise all sectoral information policies.

4.5 Capacity building in information services

The second goal of a national information policy as put by Pajaro and Betancourt (2007:29) is to build capacities for society in terms of skills to utilize information and ICTs at all levels of formal and informal education, to build capacity for research and technological innovation for one’s own knowledge and to generate national content on
the part of public institutions and local content on the part of different social groups. This section, therefore, looks at the level of competencies in the delivery of information services, level of development of the infrastructure in the delivery of information services, capacity to generate information and knowledge, capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings, capacity of the citizens of Malawi to access information, the level of capacity development in relation to libraries and information services and challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi.

4.5.1 Level of capacity development in relation to libraries and information services

UNESCO (2006:1) defines capacity as the ability of individuals, organizations or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. Capacity building in information services is the enhancement of competencies and skills of individuals, communities, organisations and nations to exploit information and ICTs through training, formal and informal education including lifelong learning; development of infrastructure, systems, and technological know-how.

Advancements in ICTs are constantly changing the work environment and are creating demand for new and diverse skills. Makin and Craven (1999:526) acknowledge that staff require re-training and re-skilling to cope with new developments so that they are able to meet the demands of users and to impart skills to the public in understanding and use of ICTs. Respondents were therefore asked to comment on the level of capacity development in relation to libraries and information services. The summary of responses shows that 34 (41.5%) of the respondents indicated that the level of capacity
development was low, 28 (34.1%) of the respondents said that it was average, 11 (13.4%) respondents said the level was high, 6 (7.3%) respondents said it was very low and 3 (3.7%) respondents said the level of capacity development was inadequate as shown in Chart 4.9 below. A relative majority 34 (41.5%) of the respondents said the level of capacity development was low. Those who indicated that capacity development was high and average attributed their answers to the Bachelor’s degree course in Library and Information Science offered at Mzuzu University and the non-graduate certificate course which the Malawi Library Association has been offering since 1979. However, information sourced from Mzuzu University, Department of Library and Information Science indicates that so far it has produced 85 Bachelor’s degree graduates and 42 undergraduate diploma graduates. The degree course started in 2005 while the diploma one started in 2003. The Malawi Library Association has so far trained over 600 library assistants at a non-graduate certificate level (Uta, 2005: 52).

![Chart 4.9: Capacity development in libraries and information services in Malawi](image-url)
The results suggest that there were low levels of skills among staff in libraries because of low education qualifications and inadequate training. Consequently the services rendered are likely to be of lower standards. This has implications on users’ access to information and utilisation. The results may also mean that libraries have not planned and invested in the training of the members of staff so that they are able to cope with advancements in ICTs and the ever changing information needs of the users. Harle (2010:viii) observes that ‘librarians require better training and development opportunities if they are to improve their skills. Personnel who are skilled, confident and motivated are likely to offer better services’. Furthermore, ICT skills are increasingly becoming critical with advancements in technology. User needs are also advancing with the rapid changing environment librarians are therefore required to acquire new skills to analyse and understand user needs and be able to communicate better with them. It appears there is no consolidated policy to guide the development of human resources in libraries and information services in Malawi.

4.5.2 Level of development of the library infrastructure in the delivery of information services

According to Lor and Britz (2007:392) a society requires a sound ICT and a physical infrastructure for its proper functioning in economic or political activities. Physical infrastructure which includes a network of libraries, roads, warehouses and airports allows the physical delivery of information products. ICT and physical infrastructure therefore, provide the means to access and use information. However, Enakrire and Onyenania (2007:20) observe that the speed at which an information infrastructure processes and transfers information determines its effectiveness and usefulness in
providing a country with a competitive edge in the global economy. The researcher asked respondents on how they viewed the level of development of the infrastructure in the delivery of information services in Malawi. 70 (85.4%) of the respondents said the infrastructure was underdeveloped, 4 (4.9%) of respondents said it was developed, 5 (6.1%) of the respondents said it was very underdeveloped, and 3 (3.7%) of the respondents said it was inadequate.

![Chart 4.10: Level of development of information services infrastructure](image)

A national information policy aims at developing the information infrastructure and systems to enhance access to information in a country (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007:29). The results suggest that the library and ICT infrastructure was underdeveloped in Malawi. Consequently it is not universally available. The majority of the citizenry may therefore have limited access to information because there is a low penetration rate of libraries and ICTs in the country. The results also suggest the presence of the digital divide in Malawi where very few people have access to the
information infrastructure because of geographical location. In addition the results suggest that libraries may not have developed systems to enhance the free flow and sharing of information because of underdeveloped ICT infrastructure as well as resource constraints to enable them adopt and maintain ICTs. This may have resulted in people having limited access to information and it is affecting their participation in socio-economic activities for the development of the country.

4.5.3 Capacity to generate information and knowledge.

Higher education and research and development play a significant role in the creation of knowledge and innovation. Lor and Britz (2007:391) observe that the development of knowledge societies requires human capital which is able to create, and utilize new knowledge from information which has been accessed. The researcher then asked respondents how they viewed the capacity to generate information and knowledge in Malawi. Twenty-seven (32.9%) of the respondents felt that the capacity to generate information and knowledge in Malawi was high, 4 (4.9%) of the respondents said it was very high, 24 (29.3%) of the respondents said it was average, 23 (28.0%) of the respondents said it was low and 4 (4.9%) of the respondents said it was very low. The results appear in chart 4.11 below.
The results suggest that Malawi has the researchers and research institutions that can generate information and knowledge. The results also indicate that Malawi may have invested in education to produce the critical mass. The results further appear to indicate that there is a significant amount of research being conducted in various fields with a high research output. According to Ondari-Okemwa (2007) Malawi ranked 14 out of the 28 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of research publications. This was based on the research publication records in the Thomas Scientific database. Malawi had a total of 1303 research publications between 1997 and 2007. South Africa was ranked number 1 with 51738 research publications while the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had the least number of research publications having published only 235 during the same period. Underscoring the quality of research output from Malawi, Adams et al (2010:no page) observe that ‘other analyses show that Malawi, with one-tenth the annual research output of Nigeria, produces research of a quality that exceeds the world average benchmark while Nigeria hovers around half that impact level’. Malawi performance may likely be attributed to the presence of a number of
international research organizations that run a number of joint research programmes with local research institutions in Malawi. The international research organisations fund a significant number of studies in various fields notably, in health and agriculture.

4.5.4 Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings

Once information and knowledge is generated, researchers and research institutions need to share it with people or communities who would need it. Fitzgerald (2010:521) posits that processes and systems for managing and disseminating research information need to be competently managed so that access to information is enhanced. The researcher hence, asked the respondents’ opinion on the capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings in Malawi. As may be seen in chart 4.12 below, 44 (53.7%) of the respondents said the capacity is low, while 9 (11.0%) of the respondents said the capacity is high, 26 (31.7%) of the respondents said it is average and 3 (3.7%) of the respondents said the capacity is very low.

Chart 4.12: Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of capacity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
A national information policy is meant to enhance competencies and skills of individuals, communities, organisations and nations through the development of systems, infrastructure, education and training, and technology know-how (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). The results may mean that most research institutions do not have systems in place for managing and disseminating research results. Scientists have also not acquired adequate skills to disseminate results of their research work. Consequently there is low access to and utilisation of information on research findings in Malawi. Institutions need to develop systems for managing research information so that it is available to those that need it. Malawi has a number of research institutions both local and international that are conducting research in various disciplines particularly in health and agriculture. These institutions can be categorised as public, private and international research organisations. Public institutions include to University of Malawi, Mzuzu University and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Forestry Research Institute, Community Health Services Unit (CHSU), Malawi Industrial Research and Technology Development Centre, Chitedze Agriculture Research Station, National Aquaculture Centre, National Statistics Office, Geological Survey, Fisheries Research Unit. Private institutions include Catholic University, University of Livingstonia, ShareWorld University, Exploits University, Tea Research Foundation and Agriculture Research and Extension Trust. International research organisations include World Agro-forestry Centre (ICRAF), International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), World Fish Centre, University of North Carolina, Johns Hopkins Research Project, and Baylor College of Medicine-Centre of Excellence. The list provided is not exhaustive but it serves as an illustration of the range of research organisations present
in Malawi. The interviews with respondents further revealed that research findings in Malawi are commonly disseminated through international peer reviewed journals, conferences, seminars and science demonstrations. Respondents also observed that these forums are attended and dominated by researchers themselves.

4.5.5 Capacity of the citizens to access information

Society needs to develop skills to be aware of the existence of the information, be able to access it and use it for their active participation in development programmes (Ameen and Gorman, 2008). The researcher wanted to find out the opinion of the respondents regarding the capacity of the citizens of Malawi to access information. The results as shown in chart 4.13 below indicate 43 (52.4%) of the respondents said that the capacity of the citizenry was low, 5 (6.4%) of the respondents indicated that the capacity was high, 15 (18.3%) of the respondents indicated that it was average, 17 (20.7%) of the respondents said it was very low and 2 (2.4%) of the respondents said it was inadequate.

Chart 4.13: Capacity of the citizens of Malawi to access information
One of the aims of a national information policy is to develop capacities and skills of individuals and communities to enable them access and utilise information and ICTs (Pajaro and Betancourt 2007:29). The results suggest that in the absence of a national information policy society has not acquired the skills to enable them access information. Education and training enhances development of skills required to access information. The majority therefore, may not have had access to formal education which is important for developing basic information searching skills. Furthermore, advancements in ICTs and the large volumes of information being produced everyday require that society acquires new skills to enable them access the information they need. The results could also be an indication of low literacy levels among the citizenry. Malawi literacy level stands at 68% (NSO 2008) which means that Malawi has a relatively high number of people who may not read or write. This has implications on their capacities to access information. Moreover most of the available information is in English which society may not be able to read because of literacy levels. The results may also mean that the infrastructure is underdeveloped and inadequate. It becomes difficult for society to develop ICT skills when the ICT infrastructure is not available.

4.4.6 Challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi

Advancements in ICTs have brought in new opportunities of exploiting information and knowledge. However, developing countries continue to face challenges in accessing and utilizing the available information resources in the world (Enakrire and Onyenania, 2007:21). Respondents were thus asked to indicate what they considered to be challenges of capacity development in information services in Malawi. They were provided with a list of challenges and were supposed to choose as many options as
would apply. The list included: inadequate highly qualified professionals, lack of informal education system to cater for the majority of the population, Inadequate vocational training, inadequate technical ICT skills, inadequate professional training institutions, inadequate training programs, lack of policies on human resource development, education system does not focus on information literacy, underdeveloped information infrastructure, brain drain, poor attitude of policy makers towards capacity building in the information sector, and low literacy levels. Respondents added inadequate positions for highly qualified information professionals and wrong placement of information professionals under the “any other” category. The results shown in table 4.5 below revealed that 68 (84.0%) of the respondents mentioned education system does not focus on information literacy, 65 (80.2%) of the respondents mentioned underdeveloped information infrastructure, 59 (72.8%) of the respondents mentioned poor attitude of policy makers towards capacity building in the information sector, 58 (71.6%) of the respondents mentioned lack of informal education system to cater for the majority of the population, 58 (71.6%) of the respondents mentioned low literacy levels, 53 (65.4%) of the respondents indicated inadequate highly qualified professionals, 53 (65.4%) of the respondents said inadequate technical ICT skills, 36 (44.4%) of the respondents mentioned inadequate training programs, 28 (34.6%) of the respondents said inadequate vocational training, 27 (33.3%) of the respondents mentioned lack of policies on human resource development, 19(23.5%) of the respondents indicated brain drain, 1(1.2%) of the respondents mentioned inadequate positions for highly qualified information professionals, and 1(1.2%) of the respondents mentioned wrong placement of information professionals. Respondents further explained that the education system
basically centres on text books. It does not encourage students to read beyond the prescribed books because what is important to students is to pass their examinations. However, an interview with one respondent revealed that UNESCO developed a curriculum on media and information literacy and that the national office is engaging Government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to map out which aspects of the curriculum can be introduced at secondary school level in Malawi.

Table 4.5: Challenges of capacity development in information services in Malawi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education system does not focus on information literacy</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underdeveloped information infrastructure</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attitude of policy makers towards capacity building in the information sector</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of informal education system to cater for the majority of the population</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low literacy levels</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate highly qualified professionals</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate technical ICT skills</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate training programs</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate professional training institutions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate vocational training</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of policies on human resource development</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain drain</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate positions for highly qualified information professionals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong placement of information professionals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A national Information policy is meant to enhance competencies of individuals or communities so that they are able to access and ICTs and to be able to exploit them (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). The results seem to suggest that students in Malawi
complete their education without acquiring information literacy skills as a result they are ill-equipped to exploit information resources and ICTs when they join the public (Enakriire and Onyenania, 2007). Information literacy equips users with skills to locate and choose the right information they require using the right searching techniques and are able to evaluate the information and utilise it (Kavulya, 2003). It also prepares students for lifelong learning where they acquire skills to locate and handle information searches on their own and manage their learning throughout their lives. It is the responsibility of institutions of learning in Malawi to instill information literacy and lifelong skills to students in order to equip them for continued development in their careers as they become members of the Malawian society (Kavulya, 2003). Advancements in ICTs and the resultant information explosion have also exerted a lot of demands on individual capacities to acquire higher skills and qualifications to be able to access and utilise information and knowledge (Kavulya, 2003). Society is also required to posses some level of information literacy in order for individuals to access information and be able to utilise it. Particular attention needs to be paid to the enhancement of competencies of women and underprivileged children and the rural communities (Lor and Britz, 2007). The results further suggest that Malawi may slowly be drifting towards an information illiterate society. Interviews with respondents however, revealed that government was working towards introducing information literacy at secondary school level. Nonetheless, secondary school may not be the convenient level. It should probably have targeted primary school level. Students need exposure to information resources as well as ICTs at an early age in order to enhance the development of information literacy (Nassimbeni and de Jager, 2000).
4.6 Legal and regulatory framework for information services

The third goal of a national information policy as put forward by Pajaro and Betancourt (2007:29) is to achieve an adequate legal and regulatory framework. Legal and regulatory framework encompasses all relevant policies, laws, regulations and implementing institutions including mechanisms that provide the framework for information services. It is meant to establish necessary standards and systems which guarantee the right to access to information and promote the exploitation of information and ICTs. This section therefore, looks at the strength of the legal and regulatory framework in information services in Malawi, and challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services in Malawi.

4.6.1 The strength of the legal and regulatory framework for information services

The legal and regulatory framework has implications on access to information. The researcher then asked the respondents how they viewed the strength of the legal and regulatory framework regarding information services in Malawi. As indicated in chart 4.14 below, 61 (74.4%) of the respondents mentioned that it was weak, 7 (8.5%) of the respondents said it is very weak, 10 (12.2%) indicated that it was strong, 1 (1.2%) of respondents indicated that it was very strong and 3 (3.3%) of respondents said it was nonexistent.
A national information policy aims at ensuring an effective and efficient legal and regulatory framework for information services in a country (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). The results suggest that Malawi has not put in place adequate and responsive policies and pieces of legislation for information services. This may mean that Malawi has in some instances not developed the required policies and legislation or they are outdated and therefore not in line with current trends in the information sector or they are repressive. This affects the free flow and sharing of information. For example Malawi does not have legislation on access to information although there is a constitutional provision in Article 37 of the 1994 constitution of Malawi. Article 37 states that “subject to any Act of parliament every person shall have the right of access to all information held by the state or any of its organs at any level of government in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his rights”. However, the constitution guarantees access to information on condition that legislation is enacted on access to information. Up to now Malawi has not enacted that legislation and people continue to
experience challenges to have access to information. The results may also mean that Malawi is using some old pieces of legislation which require revision for instance Official Secrecy Oath of 1917 which poses great challenges to access to public information in Malawi; the Malawi Censorship and Control of Entertainment Act no. 11 of 1968 which established the Malawi censorship board as a regulator to declare whether or not any material is, in its opinion undesirable within the meaning of the Act (20). The results further suggest that Malawi has some repressive pieces of legislation which are a hindrance to free access to information and ICTs. There is need to repeal such type of legislation for instance Section 46 of the penal code which gives a Minister of Information powers to regulate publications do not promote access to information. The Act states ‘If the minister has reasonable grounds to believe that the publication or importation of any publication would be contrary to the public interest, he may, by order published in the government gazette, prohibit the publication or importation of such publication.’ The legal and regulatory framework relating to information services in Malawi is therefore, a hindrance to the free flow and sharing of information. The development of a national information policy would bring about the enactment and review of related legislation on information services in Malawi.

4.6.2 Challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services in Malawi

Globalization and the IT revolution has brought in new challenges requiring appropriate legislation and also regulatory and institutional framework that will address issues of competition, privacy, consumer protection, equal access and intellectual property. Quimbo (2003:5) contend that failure or delay by developing countries in developing
an appropriate legal or policy and regulatory framework will have adverse implications on their participation in the information economy. Respondents were then asked to indicate what they considered to be challenges that the legal and regulatory framework pose on provision of information services in Malawi. They were provided with a list of possible challenges and they were supposed to choose as many options as would apply. The list included: bureaucracy, restriction to access, restrictions to use, inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information, conflicting legal instruments, lack of enforcement of laws and lack of compliance to legal requirements. Under the any other options respondents added inadequate knowledge on existing legal instruments, political interference and inadequate consultations when developing legislation. The results are outlined in table 4.6 below and show that 62 (75.6%) of the respondents mentioned inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information, 54 (65.9%) of the respondents mentioned bureaucracy, 52 (63.4%) of the respondents indicated restriction to access, 44 (53.7%) of the respondents said lack of enforcement of laws, 39 (47.6%) of the respondents indicated lack of compliance to legal requirements, 33 (40.2%) of the respondents mentioned restrictions to use, 32 (39.0%) of the respondents indicated conflicting legal instruments, 2 (2.4%) of the respondents indicated inadequate knowledge on existing legal instruments, 2 (2.4%) of the respondents indicated political interference and 1 (1.2%) of the respondents indicated inadequate consultations when developing legislation.
A national information policy leads to the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework that promotes access and utilisation of information and ICTs (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). The results indicate that the largest proportion 62 (75.6%) of the respondents said inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information was the major challenge the legal and regulatory framework pose on information services in Malawi. The results suggest that the legal and regulatory framework in Malawi is not responsive to technological advancements. The world is advancing at a very fast pace and there is need to constantly review policies and legislation in the information sector in Malawi so that the policies and the pieces of legislation are in line with current trends.

Advancements in ICTs are bringing in new and complex legal challenges which affect the flow and sharing of information. ICTs have the capability of undermining the old pieces of legislation in Malawi if new legal provisions are not put in place (Quimbo
2003). The researcher observed that there were a number of pieces of legislation in Malawi which were not in line with ICT advancements. For instance, the National Archives Act (Chap 28:01) and the Printed Publications Act (Chap19:01) of the laws of Malawi which were enacted during the colonial era do not cover electronic records and publications; the Copyright Act of 1989 which is meant to protect literary and artistic works does not cover works in the digital environment and the Malawi Censorship and Control of Entertainment Act no. 11 of 1968 does not explicitly cover information in the digital environment. Furthermore Malawi has not acceded to some of the treaties which protect works in the digital environment. The treaties include the Washington Treaty on Intellectual Property in respect of Integrated Circuits and the Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations of 1961, the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) of 1996 (DST, 2009). International treaties have implications on the copyright laws in Malawi because they shape national laws (Abdulla, 2008). The copyright Act in Malawi is therefore not compliant to international requirements. A national information policy will guide the development of associated legislation to enhance access to information in Malawi.

4.6.3 Summary of the chapter

This chapter dwelt on the presentation and analysis of findings relating to effects of the absence of the overarching national information policy on access to information, impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi, effects of the absence of the overarching national information policy on capacity building, and the implications of the absence of the policy on the legal and regulatory
framework on information services in Malawi. The next chapter deals with a discussion of the major findings of the study and how they relate to existing literature and to the research questions and objectives.
5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses major findings of the study obtained through in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis. The aim of the study was to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. Four objectives were formulated to achieve the aim of the study and these were to: find out the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on access to information services in Malawi; establish factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi; find out the extent to which the absence of an overarching policy has affected capacity building in information services in Malawi and; identify the legal and regulatory framework implications of the absence of such a policy in Malawi. The discussion focuses on the following research themes which are in line with the four research objectives of the study:

- Access to information services in Malawi
- Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi
- Capacity building in information services in Malawi
- Legal and regulatory framework in information services in Malawi

5.2 Access to information services in Malawi

As discussed earlier (Cf2.3.6 and 4.3) the first objective of a national information policy is to democratise access to information by providing free access and utilisation of information, and ICTs. However, Malawi does not have a national information policy up
to now. Malawians continue to face challenges to have access to information and ICTs and to utilise them. The absence of a national information policy has created an environment that is not favourable enough for easy access to information. ICTs are not available to everyone so that people may be able to utilise them; the publishing industry including the publishing of research findings is underdeveloped; libraries are facing a lot of challenges in their quest to facilitate access to information; and information produced by government is not freely available to all.

5.2.1 Access to information in Malawi.

The study revealed that access to information in Malawi was low. This was the thinking of the largest proportion 54 (65.9%) of the respondents (Cf 4.2.1) when they were asked to comment on the level of access to information services. The results indicate that the free flow and sharing of information and knowledge for the day-to-day use is limited. Access to information has emerged as a human right guaranteed by international human rights conventions and treaties, national legislation and constitutional provisions. Low access to information means that the Malawian citizenry are being denied their right as espoused in Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Malawians may not have acquired the right to access to information because of the absence of a national information policy and related legislation. A national information policy aims at providing free access to information and ICTs. Article 37 of the 1994 Constitution of Malawi guarantees access to information subject to an Act of parliament. However, the constitution is silent on the time frame government is required to have the legislation in place. This has given a leeway to government not to enact the legislation up to date. The development of a national information policy would have provided for
the enactment of related legislation to enhance access to information (Ayoo and Otike, 2005). Lor and Britz (2007:388) opine that participation in economic and political processes now depend on access to information. Countries that have gained a competitive edge at global level have made investments in the enabling infrastructure to enable access to information for the generation of knowledge and innovation. Lor and Britz (2007:388,391) also observe that the right of access to information is very fundamental to the production of knowledge. They argue further that the first countries to be industrialised were those that had achieved some level of democracy and freedom of information. However, Malawi has predominantly remained an agrarian society. This could be attributed to low access to and utilisation of information and ICTs. A national information policy is aimed at providing free access to information and ICTs for the generation and sharing of information and knowledge. The policy also pays particular attention to the development of information infrastructure and skills to utilise information and ICTs. A national information policy would therefore leverage Malawi out of the agrarian society and join the rest of the world in moving towards information and knowledge societies.

5.2.2 The state of publishing industry in Malawi

The study has shown that Malawi has a weak publishing industry, including the publishing of research results. The publishing industry as well as the publishing of research findings is one area a national information policy aims at developing because it enhances access to information (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). The findings show that the largest proportion 71 (86.6%) of the respondents (Cf 4.2.2) thought that the publishing industry was underdeveloped. This is an indication that there are very few
individuals or organizations in Malawi that are into production of local content within the
country. The significant presence of publications from international publishers is an
indication that Malawi imports publications. This could be attributed to the absence of a
clear government policy to promote publishing of local content in Malawi. The local
publishing industry is either failing to meet the interests of the public or the international
publishers have stifled the local industry because the country is importing instead of
supporting the local industry (Jönsson and Olsson, 2006:33). However, the researcher
noted some publishing of publications by Government Ministries and Departments,
some text books, children’s books and newspapers in the country. The directory of
publishers in Malawi produced by the National Archives of Malawi (2008:86-116) lists a
total of 224 publishers comprising individuals, private organisations and government
institutions. Governments play a major role in the information market as producers as
well as consumers of information and that the information they produce is of great value
to communities for their socio-economic development (Fitzgerald, 2010:502; Muir and
Oppenheim, 2002:175). However, government institutions in Malawi constitute a small
proportion 42.4% of the publishers list (Cf 4.2.2) an indication that government is not
publishing much and that a great deal of the information is not available in libraries and
to the communities. The findings are consistent with Ng’ambi (2010:42) who observes
that in Malawi capacity to produce and publish information in the public service is weak
due to inadequate resources, bureaucracy and political interference. In some cases,
government officers are ignorant of their responsibility to publish and others tend to be
reluctant fearing that they could be releasing restricted government information. Some
ministries do not have budget lines for publications and dissemination of information
and as such, they rely on donors. An underdeveloped local publishing industry affects
the development of libraries in a country. Most of the books have to be imported and
normally at a very high cost and libraries in most African countries do not have
adequate budgets to support purchasing of books (Odini, 1998). Conversely a
developed library network plays a significant role in promoting the growth of a local
publishing industry because it creates a market for the industry (Jönsson and Olsson,
2006:33-34). The findings suggest that Malawi does not have a developed library
infrastructure to provide the market for the development of a vibrant publishing industry.

However, in terms of publishing of research findings, Adams et al (2010) observe that
Malawi is rated highly in Africa based on the research output against the size of the
economy (GDP). Nonetheless, leading countries in Africa by output are South Africa,
Egypt, Nigeria, Tunisia, Algeria and Kenya (Adams, King and Hook, 2010). Malawi's
high performance is attributed to a significant number of collaborative research projects
being undertaken jointly by Malawian and UK academics particularly in the field of
medicine. For instance, Wellcome Foundation supports a significant number of research
projects in Malawi through the College of Medicine, a constituent college of the
University of Malawi (Adams et al 2010). Malawi is also does a lot of collaborative
research with a number of other international organisations such as University of North
Carolina; Johns Hopkins Research Project; and Baylor College of Medicine-Centre of
Excellence. These international research organisations work in corroboration with local
institutions (Gondwe and Kavinya, 2008). Gondwe and Kavinya (2008) add that
between 1996 and 2006 a total number of 506 Malawian articles appeared in
MEDLINE/PUBMED database and 489 of them were on health. They also noted that
the number of articles published from Malawi increased by 106% between 1996 and 2006 but most of them were written by foreign researchers resident in Malawi. Adams et al. (2010) also found that at least 45% of Malawi’s research papers appearing in the Thomas Reuters database were co-authored with UK researchers. This is an indication that a significant number of research findings from Malawi are co-authored with foreign researchers and are published in international journals. This could be attributed to the underdeveloped publishing industry in Malawi. The publishing of findings in international journals has implications on the availability of information in Malawi and in libraries in particular because authors have to adhere to policies set by the international publishers. The researcher also observed that there are about nine titles of peer-reviewed local journals (Cf 4.2.2) which were published mostly by local academic institutions. However, there were few journals (bout two) which were published regularly. This is an indication of the underdeveloped state of the local publishing industry of research findings in Malawi. The results are consistent with the findings of Ondari-Okemwa (2007:online) who observes that researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa wishing to publish their research findings face a number of socio-economic and technological challenges. The results further agree with Gondwe and Kavinya (2008) who observe that institutions in Malawi lack finances for research and regular production of journals. This suggests that Malawi will continue to depend on the North for its information requirements. A national information policy would aim at addressing the challenges of the publishing industry in Malawi and protecting the industry from further decline.
5.2.3 Access to information produced by government and government institutions

Government produces a lot of information which is critical to the socio-economic well-being of its citizenry. A national information policy makes it possible for society to have access to information produced by government and its institutions. However, access to information produced by government or its institutions continues to be a touchy issue in Malawi in the absence of a national information policy. The study revealed that the largest proportion 47 (57.3%) of the respondents (Cf 4.2.3) regarded access to information produced by government and government institutions in Malawi as being low. The results are consistent with the findings of Ng’ambi (2010) who thinks that access to public information in Malawi is made difficult because there is no policy or legislation on making it available. Ng’ambi further observes that government officers view publishing of information as being outside their tasks despite government having a responsibility of providing information to the public. Muir and Oppenheim (2002:175) add that access to government information has proved to be contentious and many governments are reluctant to open up access despite promising free public access. The tendency of many governments is to provide people with access to information that government wishes citizens to have access to and not what people want to read. Governments also tend to publish in official publications which often do not reach the majority of the population. The concept of legislation on access to information is to provide ready access to government information except in situations where it is not possible and reasons have to be provided (Muir and Oppenheim, 2002:470-472). When there is no national information policy or legislation governing access to public
information, the free flow and sharing of information vital for the development of a country is compromised. Muir and Oppenheim (2002:470) think that access to government information provides the public with a good understanding it needs for their participation in the socio-economic development of a country. In addition, an informed citizenry provides checks and balances on government operations in this era of democracy. According to the IFLA/UNESCO guidelines (2001:16) public libraries are required to collect local information and make it readily available. Libraries in Malawi are therefore, constrained to provide access to government information to the general public if there is low access to such information. However, interviews with respondents revealed that the Government of Malawi established a government-wide area network (GWAN) in 2003 to link all government offices as part of the e-government initiative to improve information flow and sharing among government institutions in order to enhance the delivery of its services. The network also hosts the Malawi Government website highlighting functions and programmes of Ministries and departments. E-Government is meant to provide access to government information and online interactions and transactions with the citizenry. Respondents however, observed that information on the website is often historical, not comprehensive enough and is only available in English. The network is unreliable, frequently down, speed is relatively slow, and back up services are problematic due to inadequate human resources. The system has not been rolled out to most government offices in the country. The findings corroborate Leading Associates (2011) who observe that GWAN infrastructure is underdeveloped and does not meet expectations of most ministries and departments. The GWAN covers only 30% of government offices. Consequently, some ministries
have opted for private Internet service providers for their Internet services including hosting of websites. This has resulted in content on the government website remaining underdeveloped and people not being able to access current government information. Interviews with respondents also revealed that the Government of Malawi in 2011 established an e-government office in the Office of the President and Cabinet solely responsible for e-government programmes in the country. The office is also required to provide institutional framework for ICT in the public sector and strategic leadership in ICT. E-Government initiatives have been successful in countries where they have national information policies and legislation to support infrastructure development and implementation (Muir and Oppenheim, 2002). Owen et al (2012) add that information policy plays a pivotal role in e-government agenda. However in Malawi there is no national information policy or legislation for e-government programmes (Leading Associates, 2011). This could be a recipe for failure of e-government initiatives in Malawi.

5.2.4 Libraries as facilitators of access to information

The study revealed that libraries facilitate access to information in Malawi. The largest proportion 67 (81.7%) of the respondents said “yes” although some had reservations when the researcher asked if libraries were facilitating access to information (Cf 4.2.4). However, respondents observed that libraries were beset with a number of challenges which were compromising their role in facilitating access to information. This could be attributed to the absence of a national information policy. A national information policy is meant to promote the acquisition of appropriate information resources, personnel, library structures, ICTs, commitment of financial resources and the development of
associated legislation (Uhegbu, 2004). Respondents cited the following challenges that libraries in Malawi face as they strive to facilitate access to information:

5.2.4.1 **Inadequate provision of information, human and financial resources**

The study established that libraries in Malawi are not given due attention without a national information policy in place, as a result of which they are often under-resourced in terms of information resources, qualified personnel and finances to run effective services. This was indicated by 17 (48.6%) of the respondents who had said ‘yes’ with reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to information in Malawi (Cf 4.2.4.1).

They noted that libraries often contained irrelevant stock, outdated information and information resources are mostly in English with very little local content. The results suggest that libraries in Malawi largely stock foreign publications (Cf 4.2.4.1) despite the country having the capacity to generate information and knowledge (Cf 4.4.3). There is a lot of research being conducted in Malawi but researchers seem not to appreciate the role of libraries in facilitating access to information of their research findings. They tend to hoard their research findings without wanting to deposit them with libraries. The results agree with UNESCO’s (2012a:online) observations that researchers in Malawi do not regard libraries as a possible channel for disseminating their research findings. UNESCO further notes that there is an irrational belief among researchers in Malawi that if research findings are made publicly available this may compromise chances of earning promotion and securing the often limited and competitive research funding. This type of attitude poses challenges and roadblocks to access information and utilise it in Malawi. Libraries end up having very little local content and users are forced to consult other sources like the Internet, researchers and research institutions to access such
type of information. People prefer reading content they can relate to, about their own culture and in their own language rather than fact books (Jönsson and Olsson, 2006:52).

Results also indicate that there is a shortage of professional skills in libraries in Malawi arising from limited training opportunities for librarians. This may mean that government and private sector organisations may not have included librarianship as one of the priority areas of training. Results indicate that out of the 293 library employees in Malawi, there were only 36 (12.3%) professional librarians with at least a bachelor's degree (Cf 4.2.4.1). A total of 127 (43.3%) of the personnel had an undergraduate diploma in library and information science or a MALA certificate. A significant number of library personnel in Malawi are therefore not adequately trained. In addition there were 130 (44.4%) employees who do not have any formal qualification in library and information science (Cf 4.2.4.1). This has implications on the quality of information services provided. With the prevailing conditions, services offered are likely to be of low quality because of skills deficiency in those entrusted with the running of libraries. This is contrary to IFLA/UNESCO (2001:11) guidelines which stipulate that libraries have to be adequately resourced if they are to provide the intended services to users. This also demonstrates that libraries are not valued in most organizations particularly in government ministries, departments and other government affiliated institutions. This has resulted in libraries found in these institutions being allocated inadequate funding, manned by under-qualified personnel who in some instances don’t have any library and information science qualification or background. Furthermore, most of government ministries and departments do not even have a career structure for librarians.
The study also established that most of the information resources available in libraries in Malawi are in English. This means a good proportion of the people cannot read the materials because of the low literacy levels. This is an indication that libraries are established without first assessing users’ needs as a result of which services being offered are not tailor-made to meet information requirements of users. People therefore, cannot appreciate a facility they are not able to use with ease. Libraries should be established based on the needs of the users and within the framework of a national information policy. Gray (1988) as cited in Ayoo and Otike (2002:350) explains that a national information policy is meant to identify information needs of a country and to ensure that the needs are met as timely as possible, cheaply and conveniently with the limited resources available. Malawi therefore needs a national information policy to enable libraries provide responsive information services that meet the information needs of society. The study also established that librarians are not well placed and recognised to influence policy in the information sector. The results agree with Owen et al (2012) who found that library and information professionals do not have a high profile to contribute to policy issues when he was investigating the role of information professional in the development of information policies in the UK. In the absence of a national information policy the government may take a long time to fully appreciate the role of libraries in Malawi.

5.2.4.2 Inadequate libraries

The study established that there are very few libraries in Malawi serving a large population of people and this has implications on access to information (Cf 4.2.4.2). This was indicated by 12 (34.3%) of the 35 respondents who had said ‘yes’ with
reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to information in Malawi. Respondents noted that the majority of the population in Malawi lives in the rural areas where there are very few rural-based public libraries. They also noted that libraries often lack space to operate from as most of the buildings housing libraries were not designed to host libraries. This implies that government has not invested enough in the establishment of public libraries in Malawi, particularly in the rural and the poor urban areas. The findings are consistent with Enakrire and Onyenania (2007:20) who observe that African countries are reluctant to establish more public libraries as a result of which library systems in Africa cannot meet the needs of their users. The study also established that most schools do not have libraries (Cf 4.2.4.2). The National Library Services which is responsible for the provision of public library services is able to serve only 22% of the schools, an indication that most schools do not have access to library services. The results corroborate Kavulya (2003) who after studying challenges facing information literacy in selected university libraries in Kenya found out that young people have limited access to information because of poor public library systems and collections at primary and secondary school levels. This may be interpreted to mean that the majority of the students are not being exposed to information literacy skills at an early stage and this has a negative impact on such students when they go for higher education. Nassimbeni and de Jager (2000:195) observe that students with no prior exposure to information resources have difficulties to develop the liking for information. The unavailability of school libraries ends up contributing to the problem of a poor reading culture in Malawi.
5.2.4.3 Lack of a reading culture

Jonsson and Olsson (2008) perception of a reading culture is that it is a culture where reading is highly valued and it comes as a habit. It involves reading and writing as part of one’s everyday life when this happens at school only it becomes part of a school culture. According to Igwe (2011:online) a reading culture is ‘a process of acquiring a positive reading attitude among students and children over a period of time’. Igwe further explains that a person is said to have acquired a reading culture when one reads regularly out of a habit for personal development and not because one wants to progress in an occupation. A reading culture is associated with literacy. One can only read and write when literate. The study revealed that libraries in Malawi are mostly patronized by those in school or studying for examinations (Cf 4.2.4.3). This was the thinking of some 13 (37.1%) of the 35 respondents who had said ‘yes’ with reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to information in Malawi. This implies that Malawi as a society may not have a reading culture. The National Statistics Office (2008) indicates that Malawi’s literacy rate stands at 68%. However, Malawi has been registering a decline in illiteracy rate in percentage terms but worsening in absolute terms. The free primary school education introduced in 1994 and the increased number of adult literacy classes since the beginning of the 1990s may have contributed to the decline in illiteracy rate. The challenge has been to sustain the acquired literacy levels. Many adult literacy graduates have therefore, ended up relapsing back into illiteracy (MoEST, no date). In addition, the NSO (2009:33) found that literacy rate decreased with increasing age among the adult population of 15 years and above. Ondari-Okemwa (2004) observes that although most of the African countries had registered high literacy
rates, the communities were only literate in their own local languages yet most of the literature is in foreign languages, English being the commonest. In the case of Malawi, literacy is defined as being able to read and write a simple sentence in any of the local languages including English which is one of the official languages in Malawi (NSO, 2009:32). However, it is not evident as to how many people are able to read or write a simple sentence in English in Malawi. Literacy is one other area of focus in the development of a national information policy because it is the foundation one requires to be able to access and utilise information (Arnold, 2002). The delay in approving the draft policy on literacy in Malawi has implications on the reading culture since literacy is a precursor to a reading culture. Consequently, access and utilisation of information would be affected.

5.2.4.4 Poor management of information resources

The study established that management of information resources was poor in most public institutions particularly in government ministries and departments (Cf 4.2.4.4). This was mentioned by 7 (20.0%) of respondents who said ‘yes’ with reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to information in Malawi. Poor management of information resources affects the availability of information in libraries and consequently access to information. Respondents observed that most of the information is scattered in people’s offices with no filling, classification and retrieval systems. The findings corroborate with the National Archives of Malawi (2007) which in its survey found out that the state of records management in public institutions in Malawi is ‘chaotic, collapsed and ineffective’. Government and its institutions in Malawi generate a lot of information which means that most of it is not available to the citizenry.
5.2.4.5  Lack of skills among librarians to market existing library services

The study revealed that librarians in Malawi have not done enough to market the available information resources and services so that the citizenry can access and utilise such services (Cf 4.2.4.5). This was the view of 9 (25.7%) of the 35 respondents who said ‘yes’ with reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to information in Malawi. The results are consistent with Harle (2010) who observes that raising awareness on e-resources provided by libraries, for instance, was a big challenge in Eastern and Southern African Universities (University of Malawi-Chancellor College, University of Nairobi, National University of Rwanda and University of Dar-es-salaam). Harle (2010) found that only 16% of students and members of staff had a high level of awareness on e-resources provided by their libraries. The results also suggest that librarians lack skills to market library products (Cf 4.2.4.5). The results further corroborate the findings of Ondari-Okemwa (2000) who observes the lack of marketing skills among librarians when he looked at training needs for professional librarians in Kenyan public university libraries. This could be one of the reasons people don’t patronize libraries in Malawi. Users are not aware of the services libraries offer. The hard acquired library resources therefore, end up being underutilized.

5.2.4.6  Inadequate provision of Internet services

The study established that the ICT infrastructure in most libraries in Malawi is inadequate. In addition, most libraries in Malawi do not offer Internet services to users (Cf 4.2.4.6). This was indicated by 15 (42.9%) of the 35 respondents who said ‘yes’ with reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to information in Malawi. However, a
few libraries like those in institutions of higher learning and National Library Service provide Internet services to users. The study also established that most libraries are failing to subscribe to fast Internet services because of the high costs of Internet in Malawi. Most of the libraries therefore end up subscribing to lower bandwidths and consequently their Internet is slow. The findings corroborate Bichler (2008) who found that Internet cost in Malawi is high as a result of which the number of Internet user is low. Furthermore, libraries in institutions of higher learning in Malawi do not have adequate ICT facilities. A large number of users end up sharing a limited number of computer terminals (Cf 4.2.4.6). This is quite common in public universities. The study also established that users particularly students in public universities and at the National Library Service pay for Internet services. Furthermore, charges for Internet use at NLS are almost at a commercial rate. The results contrast, Lor and Britz (2010:662) who observe that libraries play a major role in bridging the digital divide for those that do not have access to the Internet at home, office or school. Public libraries in many countries offer free Internet services to users. Hamilton and Pors (2003:411-413) note that most countries in Europe have policies that require public libraries to provide Internet access to their clients for free. Currently there is no policy to guide the development of ICTs in libraries in Malawi (Cf 4.2.4.6).

5.2.4.7 Legislation that restricts access to information

Libraries are subject to a range of other existing legislation. The study revealed that legislation that affects library services relate to copyright, censorship, legal deposit and the national archives (Cf 4.2.4.7). This was expressed by 8 (22.9%) of the 35 respondents who said ‘yes’ with reservations and ‘no’ to libraries facilitating access to
information in Malawi. The findings agree with Lor and Britz (2010:659) who observe that access to information may be affected by restrictions associated with copyright and license fees. Howse (2005) as quoted in Chiweza et al (2007:8) also observes that licensing agreements under the copyright law in Malawi are a hindrance to the use of copyright protected material for educational or research purposes.

The study also revealed that censorship laws have denied access to information where publications or information which is deemed not fit for public consumption is banned or where government bans any information viewed to be subversive. The findings agree with Chiweza et al (2007:4) who state that during the one party autocratic government in Malawi between 1963 and 1993, stringent censorship measures were employed through the Malawi Censorship Board which led to the banning of a number of information resources deemed subversive or politically sensitive. Libraries were therefore required to remove all the prohibited information resources. Ondari-Okemwa (2004:364) further observes that any information perceived to be against African leaders will be censored and will not be made available to people. The Censorship Act no.11 of 1968 was abused by the government which was in power before the advent of democratic rule in 1994. The Act was used to advance government’s cause at the expense of information needs of the Malawian citizenry. The Malawi government in 2011 re-enforced censorship through the amendment of Section 46 of the Penal Code which granted the Minister of Information power to regulate publications that he deemed not fit for the public. This was seen as a deterrent to free access to information and targeted at publications with dissenting views.
Access to national archives in Malawi is governed by the National Archives Act (Chap 28:01) of the laws of Malawi. The law prescribes conditions under which a user can access records and access is subject to approval by the National Archivist. For example, the law prescribes who can access the archives, when to access, the type of records to access, restriction on publication or reproduction, restrictions on removal and exportation of national archives, selection and conservation of public records and destruction of public records. This was viewed as an impediment to free access to information. Respondents further felt that some of the provisions in the Act are not consistent with current trends. For instance, the law restricts access to national archives for a longer period than most neighbouring countries in the SADC region. Malawi is still using the 30 year retention period for national archives while a number of the SADC countries (South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho) have moved to the 20 year retention period while other are in the process. Respondents felt that there is need to review the law so that it is in harmony with legislation in the neighbouring countries in order to facilitate access to information between countries in the region.

5.2.5 Perceived challenges to accessing information in Malawi

Malawi, like most developing countries continue to experience problems in accessing and harnessing available information resources when the world is experiencing an information explosion more than ever before with the advancements in ICTs. The study revealed that challenges to access to information include: inadequate information infrastructure, lack of policies promoting access to information, low information literacy, low literacy levels, inadequate competencies in ICTs, poor attitude of policy makers towards information, information hoarding, lack of local content, electricity supply
problems, multiplicity of languages and cultural barriers, high cost of information and ICTs, political interference and poor information management (Cf 4.2.5). However, the largest proportion 71 (86.6%) of the respondents felt that inadequate information infrastructure was the major challenge to accessing information. The results agree with Bichler (2008: 200) who observes that in Malawi, the number of information users is low and the availability of services is limited because of poor information infrastructure. Bichler adds that the development of information infrastructure remains a challenge to the provision of information services in Malawi that policy makers have to contend with. Information sourced from MACRA (Cf 4.2.5) indicates that in 2010 the penetration rate of the fixed telephone lines was at 1.2% (Malawi’s population was 13.5 million) and the Internet was at 2.3%. This means that Malawi has not invested enough in ICTs, an indication that the free flow and utilization of information is limited and the country cannot transform into an information society let alone a knowledge economy. Afullo (2000:208) argues that a country is said to be transforming into a modern economy when it attains a teledensity of at least between 25 and 30% to support its socio-economic activities. Malawi will therefore need significant investments to raise its teledensity from 1.2% to the required 25%. This is a big challenge considering the enormous financial resources required and Malawi’s dire economic situation. Malawi has relied on Vsat connections for local and international Internet access which are expensive and have limited bandwidth (Hunter, 2009:13). For instance to download a journal article at Chancellor College a constituent college of the University of Malawi would take 45 minutes for 80% download before experiencing a time out as compared to 3 minutes at University of Nairobi, 4 minutes at National University of Rwanda and 4
minutes at University of Dares salaam to download the same article because of the availability of optic fibre cable broadband connection through the undersea cable (Harle, 2010:18-19). Interviews with respondents revealed that optic fibre cable network is now available in major urban areas of Blantyre, Zomba, Mzuzu and Lilongwe with a few districts where the cable is passing through to connect these cities. Nevertheless, optic fibre cable network coverage and usage is still limited. It is only available in the major cities. It is yet to be rolled out to most parts of the country where the majority live because of financial constraints. Moreover, the cost of connectivity is still high because investors are trying to make profits out of the new investment opportunity. As a result the optic fibre cable network is not being utilized to its full potential. Current usage indicates that only 25% of the available bandwidth is being utilized (MACRA, 2011:19). Malawi is presently connected to the optic fibre cable network through Mozambique and Tanzania. The current situation where users including libraries are not optimally utilizing the optic fibre cable network because of costs means that Malawi cannot fully participate and benefit from the global network. Access to information remains a challenge as most people are economically and socially excluded. This is contrary to the expectations of NEPAD (2006:2) which argues that regions where such submarine cables have been laid have already had access to cheaper and more efficient communication with the rest of the world. Respondents attributed the issue of high cost of connectivity in Malawi to the absence of a national information policy. This is consistent with the observations made by NEPAD (2006:3-4) that countries will be required to develop internal communication network system as well as an enabling policy environment and institutional framework, and upgrade their national systems to
the same level in terms of quality and capacity to that of the East Africa Submarine Cable System if users in the East Africa region are to benefit from the connectivity to global information infrastructure. A national information policy would therefore address challenges of developing a national information infrastructure and making it universally accessible. Ayo and Otike (2002) argue that a good national information infrastructure could prompt the development of a national information policy so that it guides the operations of the infrastructure. At the same time the development of a national information policy could lead to the development of a good national information infrastructure. In the case of Malawi where the infrastructure is underdeveloped a national information policy would form the basis for the development of a good national information infrastructure.

5.3. Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi

Factors leading to the development of an overarching national information policy vary from country to country depending on the socio-economic conditions (1996). However, Malawi does not have the policy up to now. The study revealed the following as impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi.

5.3.1 Motivation for information policy development in Malawi

The study revealed that the development of information policies in Malawi is prompted by technology advancements. This was stated by the largest proportion 53 (65.4%) of the respondents (Cf 4.3.1). Advancements in ICTs and the global information infrastructure demand that countries develop policies to upgrade their information
infrastructure to the required level to enable them participate fully and benefit from the global information network or risk exclusion. The results resonate with Whalen (1994) and Afullo (2000) who noted that in recent times policy development has been prompted by the revolution of the information technology and the global network of telecommunications and information technologies (global information infrastructure) which is already developed and available in the West. Countries are therefore, expected to develop policies that will enable them to cope with the technological advancements by upgrading their infrastructure to the required level so that they can fully participate and benefit from the global information network. Content (information) has completely been forgotten because focus is on the technology. This is why policies developed so far are ICT based. For instance, Malawi developed the Communications Policy in 1998, Communications Act in 1998, the Rural Telecommunications Policy in 2002 and the draft ICT Policy in 2006 though not approved up to now.

5.3.2. Weak institutional framework

The study revealed that currently the information sector in Malawi has a weak institutional framework to guide the development of information policies. This was the opinion of 47 (58.8%) of the respondents (Cf 4.3.2.1). Sectors have adopted a pluralistic approach to the development of policies with no proper coordination. In addition there is no visionary leadership to inspire people towards action and teamwork in all programmes and initiatives across the sector. This has bred fragmentation in the sector. Information is a cross-cutting issue which requires an integrated approach to effectively harmonize national and sectoral priorities (Malawi Government 2006). According to Malawi Government website (2012:online) the mandate of the Ministry of Information
and Civic Education is to provide policy guidance on all matters concerning the media, access to public information, broadcasting, telecommunication, postal services, civic education and information communication technology. However, respondents felt that the Ministry of Information and Civic Education is failing to provide policy direction in the sector and it is also prone to political interference. Furthermore, the Ministry lacks information professionals who could provide strategic leadership and advice on policy direction (Cf 4.3.2.1). The results are consistent with the observations of the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) (2011) which acknowledges the challenge of poor coordination among ministries in policy development. The OPC (2011) further acknowledges that for many years, the policy development process in Malawi has not been systematic. Furthermore, the frequent restructuring of Government ministries and departments brings in some instability in terms of mandate, programmes and staff and consequently brings in changes in policy focus (Ayoo and Otike, 2002). This may have also contributed to the performance of the Ministry of information and Civic Education. For instance, the ministry has since 1998 changed from Ministry of Information to Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, Posts and Telecommunications to Ministry of Information and Tourism then to Ministry of information and Civic Education in 2009. This also meant change of policy makers, direction and programmes. Owen et al (2012:55) observe that UNESCO and Rockefeller Foundation emphasize the importance of a coordinating body for a national information policy. A national information policy would therefore provide mechanisms for coordinating the national information system and information services and outline the institutional arrangement in the information sector in Malawi.
The pluralistic approach in developing policies in the sector necessitates that mechanisms be put in place to harmonize them. However, interviews with respondents revealed that currently there are no mechanisms in place to harmonize the sectoral policies to avoid duplication and contradictions (Cf 4.3.2). In most cases government has put in place an overarching policy to harmonize sectoral policies. Policy development initiatives are procedurally coordinated by a line government ministry to ensure that there is harmony. The study also revealed that government recognizes the challenges ministries were encountering in the development of policies and set up a Policy Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Division in the Cabinet Office (OPC, 2011). Its key functions include: guiding ministries in developing policies, assessing performance of ministries and monitoring the implementation of key government programmes. The division came up with some guidelines on the development of policy which are yet to be adopted. However, interviews with respondents revealed that majority of them are not aware of the existence of this unit. Furthermore, respondents noted that the unit is not responsible for coordinating the development of sectoral policies. It is the duty of a ministry which is responsible for the sector. The absence of mechanisms to harmonise sectoral policies has implications on the free flow and sharing of information in the information and knowledge societies. The overarching national information policy would be critical in bringing harmony and minimizing conflicts among sector information policies.

5.3.3 Lack of finances and technical capacity

The study revealed that Malawi relies on international development partners for technical and financial assistance to develop her policies (Cf 4.3.2.2). This was
indicated by 14 (17.5%) of the respondents. Malawi is one of the least developed countries in the world that largely depends on development partners for its development programmes (Clifton et al 2011; Carbone, 2003). The Ministry of Finance (2010:11) adds that most of Malawi’s development budget has always been supported by donors with an average of 40% being funded from external resources. Respondents felt that sectoral policies were being driven by donor influence where assistance is attached to the development of a related policy. Development partners have therefore, contributed significantly to the shaping of policies in Malawi. The researcher observed that a number of policies in the sector have indeed been developed by donor assistance. Examples include the Communication policy of 1998 which was developed with funding from the Royal Danish government with technical expertise of a British consultant (Malawi Government, 1998), the rural telecommunications policy of 2002 which was developed with financial assistance from the Royal Danish government with technical expertise of a Norwegian Consultant (Malawi Government, 2002) and the Draft ICT4D policy which was developed with financial and technical assistance from UNECA and UNDP (Malawi Government, 2006). Besides the financial support, all the three policies were developed with leadership of international consultants. This demonstrates that Malawi lacks the human resource to drive the policy development process in the information sector. The results are consistent with the observations of the OPC (2011) which recognises the challenge of low capacity in policy analysis among ministries and the requirements of donors on the development of policies in Malawi. OPC (2011) further acknowledges that limited financial and human resources have affected policy development in Malawi. The study also established that policy development process in
Malawi is largely driven by government through a relevant office having observed that there is need for such a policy. Malawi has therefore adopted what UNESCO (2009a) termed the *dirigiste* approach where the development of policy and the right legal and regulatory environment is the responsibility of government.

### 5.3.4 Lack of sustained political will

The study has shown that there was lack of sustained political will to develop an overarching national information policy (Cf 4.3.2.3). This was the thinking of 55 (68.8%) of the respondents. Policy makers have not demonstrated any commitment on the development of the policy possibly because they view liberalized access to information as a threat to their political clout. Government is reluctant to empower the citizenry with information for fear of being taken to task on some of the policies being pursued. Policies and laws viewed to work to the advantage of government are fast tracked and quickly operationalized. For instance, the Malawi government in 2011 reviewed Section 46 of the Penal Code giving a Minister of Information power to regulate publications that he considers to be contrary to public interest. Respondents regarded this piece of legislation as targeting local publications carrying dissenting views that would work against government. On the other hand, government has dragged its feet on enacting the Access to Information Bill which has been in draft form for over 5 years now. Respondents also felt that there was lack of understanding of the concept of a national information policy (Cf 4.3.2.3). Respondents argued that most of the policy makers particularly Members of Parliament and Ministers are not well informed to comprehend and appreciate information policy issues in order for them to either initiate or approve useful policies. Most politicians are in policy making positions because of political
inclinations. There is also a growing tendency in Malawi of entrusting very important responsibilities to people who are not even conversant with the requirements of their positions but simply because of their political affiliations. Browne (1997) observes that lack of understanding of the concept of a national information policy affects the way policy is formulated and implemented. This has implications on the type of policies that are pursued in the information sector and in Malawi in general.

The study also established that the political history of Malawi has also contributed to the absence of an overarching national information policy (Cf 4.3.2.3). Malawi has not had much debate on an overarching national information policy since its independence in 1964 because of the autocratic government which was in power before the dawn of democracy in 1994. Sturges (1998:1) opines that “power defines information, delimits it, governs its availability, and pre-structures its effects.” Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda who reigned from independence in 1964 up to 1994 used his political clout to influence socio-economic development prospects of the country. Dr Banda became so powerful that his policies were not subject to any discussion even if they didn’t reflect the aspirations of the majority of Malawians. Dr Banda pursued policies that were favourable to his regime and that would consolidate his political power and personal economic gains. Most of the development policies were dictated by his personal goals (Tsoka and Kutengule, 2002:5-6). Malawi experienced heavy monitoring and censorship of information during this era preceding democracy. Sturges (1998:1) observes that the Malawi Government established formal and efficient mechanisms to prevent the free flow of information. Meaningful debate on information issues only started with the advent of democracy in the country in 1994. Freedom of speech and access to
information became entrenched in the 1994 Constitution of Malawi in Articles 35 and 37 respectively. Nonetheless there is still lack of a champion to lead the debate. Professionals in the information sector have not demonstrated any interest to pursue the development of such a policy possibly fearing political reprisals since government seems not ready to open up access to public information. Higher authorities are probably not sure of the implications of implementing such a policy because of lack of understanding of the concept of an overarching national information policy. Furthermore, Malawi has not had an information specialist at high policy making position to provide professional advice to government on information policy matters until the establishment of an e-Government Office in OPC in 2011 (Cf.4.2.3).

5.3.5 Level of economic development

The economic development of a country determines policies to be developed (Cf 4.3.2.5). The study revealed that Malawi is not advancing at the same pace with the rest of the world. This view was shared held by 18 (22.5%) of the respondents. Malawi has remained a poor nation with a predominantly agricultural economy despite gaining its independence from the British in 1964 (Tsoka and Kutengule, 2002:5). Government has been pre-occupied with the fight against poverty although there was limited investment in the social sectors. Emphasis was more on economic sectors particularly agriculture than social sectors (Tsoka and Kutengule, 2002:5). The focus significantly influenced public policy. Government concentrated its policy to a large extent on developing the transport and communications infrastructure that was directly linked to the agriculture sector. Development programmes were justified only in terms of expanding productivity of the agriculture sector. (Tsoka and Kutengule, 2002:5). As a result, the country is still
grappling with the provision of basic social amenities. Malawi has therefore, not reached a level of development to warrant such a policy. Poverty levels are still high, there are low levels of information literacy, low usage of information and inadequate infrastructure to support information access and utilization among others. It is only in 2002 that government started including information issues in national development plans though not featured as a prominent theme. For instance, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) a government overarching medium term strategy covering the period 2006 to 2011 includes ICT as one of the priority areas. However, the strategy lists ICT as a sub-theme together with transport, energy, water and sanitation under ‘infrastructure development’, an indication that there are more pressing issues that government considers before information. Information is not on the government top priority list. For instance, the State of the Nation Address delivered by the President during the state opening of the 2011/2012 budget meeting of Parliament on 23 May 2011 lists ICT in the category of ‘other priorities’ after the category of ‘our priorities’. This implies that ‘our priorities’ are the main priorities where government will focus the budget on before turning to ‘other priorities’.

5.3.6 Existence of overarching government development plans

The study revealed that the existence of overarching government development plans have contributed to the absence of the national information policy (Cf 4.3.2.5). This was expressed by 12 (15.0%) of the respondents. One of the characteristics of public information policy is that it shapes events and responds to events. It can influence events and can also be influenced and guided by events (Rowland, 1996). Development plans once formulated and implemented, serve as single reference documents for policy
makers in government, private sector, civil society organizations, donors and cooperating partners on socio-economic growth and development priorities for Malawi. For instance government had the Statement of Development Policies from 1971 to 1998, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) from 2002 to 2006 and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) from 2006 to date. Information has only been featured as ICT starting with the MPRSP in 2002. The MGDS is the current overarching operational medium term strategy (Cf 4.1.6). Its main thrust is to create wealth through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development. Sectors are supposed to complement government’s efforts by aligning and harmonizing their programmes and activities to priorities listed in the MGDS (Malawi Government 2006). The MGDS is regarded as a supreme policy from which sectors are supposed to draw their policy formulation guidelines. Sectors therefore use the MGDS as a basis of developing sector information policies. The MGDS only includes ICTs though not among the priority of priorities. Content (information) has completely been forgotten because focus is on the technology. This is why policies developed so far are ICT-based.

5.3.7 International trends

Malawi is part of the international community of nations and is open to international influence. This was mentioned by 20 (25.0%) of the respondents. Governments and International organisations have played a major role in shaping the country’s policies. Malawi is party to a number of international agreements and conventions and is under obligation to comply with the provisions of these agreements (Cf 4.3.3.6). There has not been any pressure from the international level or from lobbying groups for Malawi to
develop an overall national information policy and probably the thinking is that the policies at sectoral level are working well and there is no need to develop an overarching policy although evidence is required to determine if the sectoral policies are indeed working. The results corroborate Browne (1997) who observes that the tendency with governments has been to react to specific issues put forward by powerful stakeholder groups which have been very influential in policy formulation. Government policy responses have therefore, not been systematic because they have been reactive to specific issues raised. This has contributed to the lack of coherence and integration of policies. Respondents further noted that international organisations and governments at global level are no longer focusing on overarching national information policies but sectoral policies. Government is therefore, obliged to adopt the same approach since these international organisations and governments provide the financial and technical assistance for the development of these sectoral policies. Furthermore, such support is attached to conditions which the Malawi government has to adhere to. The findings are consistent with observations OPC (2011) made that one of the challenges in the development of policies in Malawi is external forces. Interests of development partners have been the driving force behind the development of policies in Malawi.

5.3.8 Diverse nature of the information sector

The study revealed that the absence of an overarching national information policy could be attributed to the diverse nature of the information sector. This was mentioned by 49 (61.2%) of the respondents (Cf 4.3.2.7). They observed that the policy would take a long period to develop, require significant financial resources, skills and that the development process would be complex if all sectors were to be considered in a single
policy. They felt that sectoral policies once developed will inform the development of an
overarching policy because they will have been tested to see if they are work. However,
they noted that the challenge with such information policies formulated at sectoral level
first is that they become more restrictive than enabling because they often lack national
direction. They also noted that sectors, take their own initiatives to develop such sector-
related information policies as a result of which they lack the guidance of an overall
national information policy framework. They further observed that each sector has its
own interest which may be better articulated and monitored in a sectoral policy than an
overarching information policy covering many sectors. Respondents believed that
people contribute well at a level they understand better and have that sense of
ownership at sectoral level. Furthermore sectors are developing at different levels
requiring different interventions at different times. Others were of the view that it is
easier to solicit resources for a focused sectoral information policy formulation than an
overall policy covering the entire sector which may be costly. Limitation of resources
demands that policies are prioritized and developed at sector level. Sectoral policy
issues may not have been sensitive enough to political structures as compared to an
overarching national information policy. Nevertheless, Whalen (1994) argues that if the
worrying factor is the diversity and size of the sector it follows that the same concern
should be raised when developing sectoral policies because how many will have to be
developed to cover the entire sector. The issue of resources is not exclusive to a
national information policy. Formulation of any national policy requires significant
commitment on the part of government in terms of time, human and financial resources.
The issue of resources therefore is applicable to the development of all national
policies. In addition the development of information policies at sectoral level might end up being more costly than an overarching national information policy if one considers the number of sectoral policies to be developed.

5.4 Information services capacity building in Malawi

As highlighted earlier (Cf 2.3.7 and 4.4) the second objective of a national information policy is to build capacities for society to access and utilise information and ICTs. It also includes capacity for research and technological innovation in order to generate knowledge. UNESCO (2006:1) defines capacity as the ability of individuals, organizations or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. Capacity building is also referred to as capacity development because it works on the premise that capacity already exists but only requires enhancing or strengthening. Despite registering interest in the development of a national information policy three decades ago Malawi does not have the policy up to now and society continues to face challenges to access and utilise information and ICTs because of inadequate competencies and underdeveloped information infrastructure.

5.4.1 Level of competencies in relation to libraries and information services

A national information policy aims at building competencies and skills of individuals and communities through education and training in order to enhance access to information and ICTs. However, Malawi does not have a national information policy in place. The study showed that the level of competencies in relation to libraries and information services is low. This was mentioned by the largest proportion 34 (41.5%) of the respondents (Cf 4.4.1). The results suggest that there were low levels of skills and
understanding among library personnel to carry out required services effectively because of low education and inadequate training. Smith (2003:443) considers education and training of human resource as the means of enhancing work related competencies of people working as individuals, in teams, and in organisations. It provides people with the knowledge, understanding and skills which enable them to perform effectively. Enhancement of knowledge and skills has to be a continuous process to keep abreast with the rapid changing environment. Nassimbeni and de Jager (2000:193-194) observe that these constant changes bring in the demand for new skills and competencies day by day in the work arena and the need for a learning society. Advancements in ICT are creating new demands on libraries in terms of more services and new kinds of services. Librarians are therefore required to re-skill in order to cope with new information demands of users. With the information explosion, users are also required to acquire new and sophisticated skills to enable them access the information they need. Librarians therefore need skills and competencies to be more proactive in facilitating access to information and developing user education and training programs on ICTs (Nassimbeni and de Jager, 2000:194). However, there is no consolidated policy to guide the development of personnel in libraries, archives and documentation centers in Malawi. Training policies exist at institutional level. Respondents further observed that most of the personnel working in libraries posses a MALA non-graduate library certificate and in some instances particularly in government institutions do not even have the certificate. For 24 years MALA was the only institution offering library studies in Malawi and at non-graduate certificate level. MALA has so far trained over 600 certificate holders (Uta 2005:52). Training above certificate level was available outside
the country and scholarships were hard to come by because of lack of funds (Dutton and Msiska, 1994:27). In addition training was a problem probably because information was not among the national priority areas as evidenced by government development plans. However, the situation changed for the better when Mzuzu University started offering a Diploma course in Library and Information Science in 2003 and consequently a Bachelor’s degree course in Library and Information Science in 2005. According to Mzuzu University, the Department of Library and Information Science has to date graduated 85 Bachelor’s degree and 42 diploma holders. The results also show that there has been an increase in the number of professional librarians in Malawi. Currently there are 36 professional librarians with a Bachelor’s degree and above (Cf table 4.1). However, this is in contrast to observations made by Salanje (2007) who argues that there are only twenty trained librarians. Despite having an increase in the number of trained professional librarians, the researcher noted that most libraries including government libraries continue to be run by certificate holders and in some cases by personnel without any formal library training. Furthermore, the findings suggest that government has no establishments for library and information science graduates. One would question whether government is serious in improving access to information in Malawi. The low level of competencies in libraries and information services could therefore be attributed to the absence of a national information policy in Malawi.

5.4.2 Level of development of the infrastructure in the delivery of information services

The study established that the infrastructure for the delivery of information services in Malawi is underdeveloped (Cf 4.4.2). This was mentioned by the largest proportion 70
(85.4%) of the respondents (Cf chart 4.10). The results suggest that there is inadequate ICT infrastructure resulting in low Internet penetration as well as speed and a very low tele-density of fixed telephone lines with very few people having computers to access Internet. It also implies that there is lack of a network of government libraries, school libraries, special and public libraries to provide access to information. Makin and Craven (1999:526) note that a library network is aimed at providing equal opportunity to the public to access electronic information from urban and rural areas. It also provides ready access to local or central government information and services to allow the participation of people in socio-economic development. Government has therefore, not paid much attention to the building of more libraries and enabling technologies for accessing, utilizing and generating information and knowledge. The few libraries available serve a small proportion of the population, leaving out the majority socially excluded. The formulation of a national information policy would therefore ensure the development of the information infrastructure in Malawi.

5.4.3 Capacity to generate information and knowledge

The study revealed that Malawi has the capacity to generate information and knowledge (Cf 4.4.3). A relative majority 27 (32.9%) of the respondents indicated that the capacity to generate information and knowledge in Malawi was high. The results agree with Adams et al. (2010) who contend that Malawi’s research output is considered to be amongst the highest in Africa based on the size of the economy. Adams et al further argue that Malawi’s high performance is attributed to a significant number of collaborative initiatives with UK academics particularly in the field of medicine. The results suggest that Malawi has the human resource and institutions which may
generate information and knowledge. There are a number of local research institutions both public and private, and international research organizations (Cf 4.4.3) that run a number of joint research programmes in Malawi and publishing their research findings in international journals. The results also suggest that Malawi has the potential to develop into a knowledge society only if it develops its ICT infrastructure, information awareness and literacy among society (Lor and Britz, 2007:391). Such developments would enhance information flow and sharing. UNESCO (2009a) opines that countries that have developed into information societies are those that have developed national information policies. A national Information policy enhances access to information and ICTs and their utilisation which are prerequisites of an information society.

5.4.4 Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings

The study revealed that capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings was low (Cf 4.4.3). This was mentioned by the largest proportion 44 (53.7%) of the respondents (Cf Chart 4.13). A national information policy is meant to build capacity of organisations or institutions through the establishment of systems and development of infrastructure to ensure that there is a free flow and sharing of information among the citizenry (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007). Capacity building extends to research and innovation so that researchers acquire skills to generate information and knowledge (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007) and to be able to communicate their research findings to a wider society. The results suggest that there are no proper systems to manage information on research findings in most of the institutions. Researchers also lack the proficiency in organizing and publicizing research findings as a result of which access to information on research findings is limited. The results resonate with Stephenson and
Hennink (2002) who note that many researchers do not have dissemination skills because of lack of training in communication of research findings outside the academic circles; researchers are also uncertain who to disseminate the findings to; there is lack of resources for disseminating findings beyond the circulation of a research report and; some researchers are reluctant to disseminate their results if they are in conflict with the country’s politics. Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (2009:online) adds that failure to determine the purpose of the dissemination of the research findings is another weakness noted among researchers which affects management and dissemination of research findings. Stephenson and Hennink (2002:5-6) further observe that commissioned research uses workshops involving stakeholders or the sponsor may be responsible for publicising the findings far and wide. Dissemination of findings for non-commissioned research is often through academic forums like peer-reviewed journals and research conferences. However, interviews revealed that the commonly used methods of dissemination in Malawi are conferences, seminars and science fairs and international peer reviewed journals which are mostly patronized by researchers themselves. The use of these dissemination channels suggests that researchers mainly disseminate findings to each other and this limits access and use of information on research findings by society. The study also showed that researchers do not often appreciate the need to deposit copies of their research work with libraries to enhance access to information. The national information policy is therefore imperative to promote and coordinate the national information system and consequently the flow and sharing of research information in Malawi.

5.4.5 Capacity of the citizens of Malawi to access and utilize information
The study revealed that the citizenry in Malawi do not have sufficient capacity to access and utilize information (Cf 4.4.6). The largest proportion 43 (52.4%) of the respondents indicated that the capacity of the citizenry to access and utilize information was low (Cf chart 4.13). The results suggest that society in Malawi lacks the skills to access and utilise information because people may not have attained enough education. NSO (2009:33-34) acknowledges that 69% of the adult population in Malawi have no formal education qualifications and 29% have never attended any school. Ondari-Okemwa (2004:371) observes that basic education is quite important in terms of developing basic skills to enhance access to global knowledge in a country. However, Ondari-Okemwa notes that the education system in Africa focuses more on formal education than vocational skills. Yet formal education accommodates a very small proportion of the society leaving out the majority not trained. Furthermore, the dropout rate of school going children is quite high in Africa. This has implications on the capacities of the communities to access and utilise information. The development of a national information policy would address the challenges of skills gap to enable society access and utilise information. A national information policy aims at developing competencies and skills of individuals and communities and the nation through formal and informal education and training in order to enhance access to information and ICTs and to be able to utilise them (Pajaro and Betancourt, 2007).

5.4.6 Challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi

The study revealed that challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi included: inadequate highly qualified professionals, lack of informal education system to cater for the majority of the population, Inadequate vocational training,
inadequate technical ICT skills, inadequate professional training institutions, inadequate training programs, lack of policies on human resource development, education system does not focus on information literacy, underdeveloped information infrastructure, brain drain, poor attitude of policy makers towards capacity building in the information sector, and low literacy levels, inadequate positions for highly qualified information professionals and wrong placement of information professionals (Cf 4.4.7). However, the largest proportion 68 (84.0%) of the respondents mentioned “education system does not focus on information literacy” as the major challenge to capacity development in information services in Malawi (Cf table 4.5). The results conform to Enakrire and Onyenania (2007:24) who observe that African students at various levels still grapple with issues to do with information services provided by libraries and other sources like the Internet because information literacy has not yet been included in most school curricula in Africa. The results suggest that students in Malawi at all levels of education face challenges to access and utilise the available information resources and sources provided by libraries including the Internet. The problem is compounded by the absence of libraries in primary and secondary schools. Students encounter more problems when they reach university where they are supposed to enhance their information literacy to acquire a competitive edge in society. Nassimbeni and de Jager (2000:195) observe that students coming from schools without libraries and ICTs do not have prior experience to develop the liking for information and ICTs. Nassimbeni and de Jager note that exposure to information resources as well as ICTs fosters the development of information literacy. The current education system in Malawi places emphasis on text books, it does not encourage independent and critical thinking using a variety of
information from different sources and ends up producing a society which is not information literate. The interviews further revealed that initiatives are underway to introduce information literacy in the education system in Malawi. UNESCO developed a curriculum on media and information literacy and the UNESCO local office is discussing with the Malawi’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to chart out areas of the curriculum which can be adopted for secondary school education in Malawi. However information literacy should have been introduced starting from primary school curriculum so that pupils are exposed to information early enough in their education. Information literacy orients students on how to find information and prepare them for lifelong learning because they will now be able to find information they need and be able to use it for the purposes it is needed for, be it a task or decision. Kavulya (2003:221) writing about challenges facing information literacy efforts in selected Kenyan university libraries adds that despite some effort the majority of the students finish their university studies without acquiring skills in information retrieval and use. This is the challenge students in Malawi will continue facing because of introducing information literacy in later stages of the education system. Furthermore, the adoption of information literacy into the school curriculum may face serious challenges in the wake of underdeveloped school libraries in Malawi. Effective delivery of information literacy lessons would require the presence of school libraries. Information literacy is one of the areas of focus of a national information policy. The development of a national information policy would mean the enhancement of information literacy in Malawi. Information literacy plays a significant role in developing competencies and skills of individuals and communities so that they are able to access information and ICTs and to be able to utilise them.
5.5 Legal and regulatory framework in information services in Malawi

The third objective of a national information policy (Cf 2 3.8 and 4.5) is to establish a strong legal and regulatory framework. The Legal and regulatory framework in information services encompasses policies, legislation and regulatory bodies. The framework is critical to the development of the information sector as it guarantees access to information, protection of IPR and data, and censorship (Karan, 2011:13). Uhegbu (2004) adds that the development of a national information policy entails the enactment of related legislation by government and enhancement of information infrastructure to improve and sustain the national information system and services. However, Malawi does not have a national information policy to date and the legal and regulatory framework for information services faces a number of policy and legislative inadequacies to effectively promote access and use of information and ICTs.

5.5.1 Strength of the legal and regulatory framework for information services

The study revealed that the legal and regulatory framework for information services in Malawi is weak (Cf 4.5.1). This was indicated by the largest proportion 61 (74.4%) of the respondents (Cf Chart 4.14). The weak legal and regulatory framework suggests that Malawi has not put in place adequate policies and responsive legislation to promote access to information, its utilization and use of ICTs. The development of a national information policy leads to the development of relevant legislation (Uhegbu, 2004). However, Malawi does not have the policy in place. The weak legal and regulatory framework could be as a result of the following:
Currently Malawi does not have legislation on access to information. A Bill was drafted and passed on to parliament in 2003 for enactment but nothing has happened up to now despite civil society organizations constantly lobbying government to pass it. However, there is a provision in the Malawi constitution. Article 37 of the constitution states that ‘subject to any Act of parliament every person shall have the right of access to all information held by the state or any of its organs at any level of government in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his rights. Legal commentators have advanced two different interpretations of the provision. Some have observed that the wording ‘subject to any Act of parliament’ weakens the provision because access is only guaranteed as long as it does not conflict with any other Act of parliament (Memeza, no date:32). On the other hand, some legal analysts have noted that the weakness with the provision is the wording 'subject to any Act of parliament' which does not provide the timeframe for enacting the necessary legislation to provide access to information (Sentala, 2008:no page). Both interpretations however, point out the weakness of the provision in enhancing access to information. Ng’ambi (2010:5-6) further observes that the absence of legislation on access to information means that publishing of government information in Malawi is still not obligatory. Respondents also observed that a number of policies and legislation have not been developed for instance the ICT policy, library policy, IP policy and literacy policy among others. This affects the availability of information in libraries and the free flow of public information to the citizenry. Government needs to expedite the development of policies in the information sector and enactment of legislation so that Malawians are guaranteed access to
information. The development of a national information policy would address these inadequacies and also lead to the development of related legislation.

5.5.1.2 Use of old legislation

Malawi is still using some of the old pieces of legislation which were not in line with current trends and inhibit access to information. Some of the old pieces of legislation include:

Official Secrets Act of 1917

Ng’ambi (2010:5) observes that the continued use of the 1917 Official Secrets Act is a setback on access to information. The Act may give government the liberty to classify information as confidential as it feels. Access to public information therefore, remains a big challenge in Malawi with the continued use of the Official Secrets Act of 1917.

The Printed Publications Act (Chap 19:01) of the Laws of Malawi

Malawi has the Printed Publications Act (Chap 19:01) of the Laws of Malawi which is administered by the National Archives of Malawi. The Act provides for the registration of newspapers, the printing and publication of books and the preservation of printed works published in Malawi. However, from the title and the provisions of the Act one would quickly notice that the Act does not cover electronic publications or records. It only recognises printed books and has defined a book to include ‘every part or division of a book, pamphlet, newspaper, sheet of letter press, sheet of music, map, plan, chart or table separately published’. It obviously requires updating to be in line with the existing
pieces of legislation as well as current trends in the field of information which is very dynamic.

**Intellectual Property (IP) Laws**

Intellectual Property (IP) laws particularly Copyright has implications on libraries which have a responsibility of managing intellectual works. The study has revealed that Malawi does not have a policy on IP. According to WIPO (2004) IPR gives the creator of works, (ideas, inventions or processes) exclusive rights to their works for varying length of periods. IPR consists of two parts, industrial property rights covering inventions (patents), trademarks, industrial designs etc; and copyright which covers literary and artistic work (novels, poems, music, drama, paintings, photographs etc). Respondents observed that the concept of IPR in Malawi is not well understood and has resulted in researchers being reluctant to share information. People tend to keep valuable information to themselves because they feel their information is not protected and may economically not benefit from their knowledge.

However, Malawi has pieces of legislation that constitute an IP legal framework comprising; industrial property laws and Copyright Act of 1989 (DST, 2009). The copyright Act of 1989 ensures protection of literary and artistic work but does not explicitly cover protection of information in the digital environment like electronic publications and Internet based information although there is mention of audio-visual materials and sound recording pertaining to music and films. In addition Malawi has not assented to some of the treaties that protect intellectual property in the digital environment (Cf 4.5.1). The treaties include the Washington Treaty on Intellectual
Property in respect of Integrated Circuits and the Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations of 1961, the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) of 1996 (Cf 4.5.1). These international instruments shape national laws on copyright so that they are responsive to current trends (Abdulla, 2008). This has implications on the strength of the legal and regulatory framework for information services in Malawi. The findings corroborate Enakrire and Onyenania (2007:22) who observe that Copyright laws in some African countries are either obsolete and do not protect electronic works or have not been developed at all. Some countries have not even ratified the international agreements on copyright and intellectual property. If Malawi is to take advantage of the advancements in ICTs to enhance information flow and sharing, governments should put in place measures to encourage the production and protection of electronic information products by putting in place appropriate copyright laws and intellectual property policy. A national information policy aims at achieving adequate legal and regulatory framework. The development of a national information policy would therefore lead to the enactment of related legislation in Malawi in order to promote access to information and ICTs and their utilisation.

5.5.1.3 Repressive legislation

Repressive legislation still exists within Malawi’s statutes. For instance, respondents observed that Section 46 of Malawi’s Penal Code gives a Minister of Information power to regulate publications and it states “If the minister has reasonable grounds to believe that the publication or importation of any publication would be contrary to the public interest, he may, by order published in the government gazette, prohibit the publication
or importation of such publication.” The law was enacted during the colonial era and was recently amended in 2011 as reflected. This legislation is regarded as being repressive which government would use to ban any publication it deems subversive. This piece of legislation is a hindrance to democratized access and utilisation of information and government needs to revisit it.

5.5.1.4 Censorship

Malawi has legislation on censorship of information in print form. However, there is no specific law regulating content on the Internet. The Malawi Censorship and Control of Entertainment Act no. 11 of 1968 establishes the Malawi Censorship Board as a regulator to declare whether or not any material is, in the opinion of the Board undesirable within the meaning of the Act and it may also exempt any person or institutions from the provisions of the Act. The law does not specify the type of materials but simply states any material offensive or harmful to public morals and this gave leeway to the Board. The law was enacted during the one party era and was used extensively to ban any material government considered undesirable. This affected the availability and accessibility of information even in libraries where such information had to be withdrawn from circulation or pages containing such information were ripped from documents.

5.5.1.5 Library Law

Malawi does not have legislation establishing a national library. A national library acts as a repository of national heritage and therefore meant to be established by legislation IFLA/UNESCO (Gill, 2001:15). The absence of the national library has resulted in
functions that are supposed to be carried out by a national library being fragmented and executed by different institutions without proper coordination as a result of which some of the functions are never carried out and in some cases are being duplicated (NRCM, 2005). Institutions that assumed the functions of the National library included the National Archives of Malawi, the Directorate of Documentation and Information Services of the NCST, the Museums of Malawi and the National Library Service as outlined in chapter 1. The National Library Service Board was established by Act no. 31 of 1967. The functions of the Board as outlined in section 4, item 1 are to promote, establish, equip, manage, maintain and develop libraries in Malawi.

5.5.1.6 Data protection and privacy

Malawi does not have specific legislation relating to data protection. It relies on other pieces of legislation which have provisions for personal privacy and data protection like the constitution, the Official Secrets Act of 1917 and the Communications Act of 1998. Data protection laws are developed to protect personal information, very advanced research, scientific inventions and security documents from irresponsible and unscrupulous use like cybercrime. With data protection laws individuals are guaranteed privacy (Karan, 2011:44). Data protection legislation is common in developed countries. Its global importance lies in the limitation it places on communicating or exchanging data with countries that do not have same level of data protection. Therefore any country wishing to engage in data exchange with developed countries will be required to develop data protection laws first (Karan 2011:44). This implies that Malawi may not be able to share data with developed countries that have data protection laws because protection of data is not guaranteed without specific legislation. This has implications on
libraries facilitating access to and use of information or data available in developed countries. Malawi needs to develop explicit data protection laws to facilitate the flow and sharing of information within and outside the country. A national information policy would guide the development of the required legislation.

5.5.2 Challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services in Malawi

The study revealed that there are a number of challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services (Cf 4.5.2) which include: bureaucracy, restriction to access, restrictions to use, inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information, conflicting legal instruments, lack of enforcement of laws and lack of compliance to legal requirements, inadequate knowledge on existing legal instruments, political interference and inadequate consultations when developing legislation. The main challenge as mentioned by the largest proportion 62 (75.6%) of the respondents was inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information (Cf table 4.6). The results indicate that the legal and regulatory framework is not consistent with the advancements in information technology and is likely to face overwhelming challenges in the ever changing digital environment. Quimbo (2003:5) observes that advancements in technology require countries to have legislation which is responsive to new trends. The advancement of ICTs has come along with legal complexities with some difficult to resolve. Legislation which may be applicable in the print environment may be irrelevant in the digital environment. For instance there is an issue of legal recognition of electronic documents and signatures. Quimbo (2003:16) further observes
that the digital technology has the potential to undermine copyright laws and related rights if legal provisions are not put in place and applied appropriately.

Malawi needs to review and enhance the legal and regulatory framework so that it is responsive to technological advancements. The formulation of a national information policy would therefore entail government putting in place relevant legislation to facilitate access to information and ICTs and their use.

5.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter dwelt on a discussion of the major findings of the study obtained through in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis which were in line with the research questions and objectives of the study. The chapter discussed findings relating to the effects of the absence of the national information policy on access to information services in Malawi, factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy, effects of the absence of the policy on capacity building in information services in Malawi and on the legal and regulatory framework relating to information services in Malawi.

The next chapter is the final chapter and looks at recommendations, future areas of research and conclusion based on the findings of the study.
Chapter 6

Recommendations, future areas of research and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of research findings, recommendations based on the findings of the study, future areas of research and conclusion. The aim of the study was to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi. The objectives of the study were to: find out the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information access in Malawi; establish factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi; find out the extent to which the absence of an overarching policy has affected capacity building in information services in Malawi and; identify the legal and regulatory framework implications of the absence of such a policy in Malawi.

6.2 Summary of findings

This sub-section outlines the summary of the findings of the study based on the four research objectives.

6.2.1 Access to information in Malawi

The study showed that access to information in Malawi is low. This was indicated by the largest proportion 54 (65.9%) of the respondents (Cf 4.2.1). The results suggest that society has not developed the necessary competencies to access information and ICTs, and to be able to utilise them. New and sophisticated skills are required in the wake of the information explosion and advancements in ICTs. Furthermore ICTs may not be universally available for society to access and utilise them.
6.2.1.1 State of publishing industry in Malawi

The study revealed that the publishing industry in Malawi is underdeveloped. This includes the publishing of research findings. The largest proportion 71 (86.6%) of the respondents indicated this when the researcher asked them about the state of the publishing industry in Malawi (Cf 4.2.2). The results suggest that Malawi has not realised the need for local content development. The output of the publishing industry is low. Government has not put up policy measures to encourage production of local content of interest. Malawi has therefore, very few established individuals and organisations who are publishing local content in the country. The results further suggest that Malawi is importing content because of the undeveloped local publishing industry. It also means that most of the writers from Malawi have to publish with renowned publishers abroad and they have to adhere to their policies. Malawi may therefore continue to rely on the North for its own local information. This poses challenges to the development of collections in libraries with local content from local authors.

6.2.1.2 Access to government information

Access to information generated by government or its institutions remains a sticky issue in Malawi (Cf 4.2.3). The study revealed that the largest proportion 47 (57.3%) of the participants regarded access to information produced by government and government institutions in Malawi as low. This was attributed to the absence of a policy and legislation on access to public information. However, government put up some e-government initiatives in 2003 to enhance services delivery. One of the initiatives was a government-wide area network to link all government offices. The system also hosts a
government website although respondents noted that content is often not comprehensive, historical and not available in local languages. The system is intermittently down, speed is relatively slow, back up services are not readily available.

It is yet to roll out to most of government offices. Currently only 30% of government offices have access to GWAN. Government in 2011 also established an e-Government Office to oversee e-government programmes as well as revisit the institutional framework for ICT in the public sector and provide strategic leadership in ICT. However, there is no policy to guide e-Government initiatives.

6.2.1.3 The role of libraries in facilitating access to information in Malawi

The study revealed that even though libraries play the role of facilitating access to information in Malawi they face serious challenges. This was indicated by 35 (42.7%) of the respondents (Cf 4.2.4). They argued that libraries are faced with a number of challenges in their quest to render effective information services. The challenges included:

- inadequate information resources which are mostly in English with very little local content
- inadequate financial and human resources
- inadequate library infrastructure
- under-qualified personnel
- Inadequate provision of Internet services
- lack of marketing skills to market available information services
- lack of a reading culture
- poor management of information
• inadequate provision of internet services and
• legislation restricting access to information.

Respondents also observed that there is no policy to guide the development of libraries in Malawi. These challenges have an effect on the free flow and sharing of information.

6.2.1.4 Challenges of accessing information in Malawi

The study revealed that challenges of accessing information in Malawi include:
• inadequate information infrastructure
• lack of policies promoting access to information
• low information literacy, low literacy levels
• inadequate competencies in ICTs
• poor attitude of policy makers towards information
• the culture of hoarding information
• lack of local content
• unreliable electric power supply
• multiplicity of languages and cultural barriers
• high cost of information and ICTs
• political interference and poor information management.

The largest proportion 71 (86.6%) of the respondents however, considered inadequate information infrastructure as the major challenge to accessing information in Malawi (Cf 4.2.5). The results suggest that the information infrastructure is underdeveloped and is not universally available for users to freely access information.
6.2.2 Impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy

The study revealed that the following factors were impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi.

6.2.2.1 Motivation to develop information policy in Malawi

The study established that the factors that prompt the development of sectoral information policies in Malawi include technology advancements, regulation of the kind of information which may be accessed by who, international trends, international conventions and treaties, public interests, easy access to information, information market forces, development of new applications or systems, legal events, harmonization of services, regulation on when information may be accessed and other policies. However, the largest proportion 53 (65.4%) of the respondents indicated technology advancements (Cf table 4.4). Advancements in ICTs and the information superhighway require that countries develop policies to upgrade their information infrastructure to the required level to enable them participate fully and benefit from the global information network.

6.2.2.2 Weak institutional framework

The study revealed that currently, the sector has a weak institutional framework to guide the development of the information sector. There is a pluralistic approach to the development of policies with no proper coordination. This was observed by 47 (58.8%) of the respondents (Cf 4.3.2.1). Furthermore the sector lacks leadership to propel people towards action and teamwork in all programmes across the sector. This has
broad fragmentation in the sector. Respondents felt that the Ministry of Information and Civic Education whose mandate is to provide policy guidance in the entire sector has not been able to fully carry out its mandate because of political interference and lack of information professionals in the Ministry.

6.2.2.3 Lack of finances and technical capacity

The study revealed that Malawi does not have financial resources and the technical know-how to develop policies in the information sector (Cf 4.3.2.2). This was considered by 14 (17.5%) of the respondents as one of the factors which have led to the absence of a national information policy. Malawi relies on international development partners for technical and financial assistance to develop its policies including in the information sector. The OPC (2011) acknowledges the limitation of finances and human resources for the development of policies in Malawi. Development partners have therefore significantly contributed to the shaping of policies in Malawi and are influencing the development of sectoral information policies.

6.2.2.4 Lack of sustained political will

The study established that there is inadequate political will to develop an overarching national information policy. This was mentioned by 55 (68.8%) of the respondents (Cf 4.3.2.3). Respondents noted that policy makers are not committed to the development of the policy because they view liberalized access to information as a threat to their political power. They felt that policies and laws viewed to work in favour of government are expedited and those deemed to work against government are given very little attention if any. It was also noted that most of the politicians are not knowledgeable
enough to propose or formulate useful policies and enact good legislation in the information sector.

It was further noted that the political history of Malawi has also contributed to the absence of an overarching national information policy. Malawi has not had much debate on an overarching national information policy before the dawn of democracy in 1994. Malawi during the pre-democracy era experienced heavy information suppression and surveillance by government (Sturges, 1998). The citizenry engaged themselves in meaningful discussions on information issues with the coming of democracy in the country in 1994. Freedom of speech and access to information now had provisions in the 1994 Constitution of Malawi. However, there is still lack of a champion to lead the debate. Professionals in the information sector have not demonstrated any interest to pursue the development of such a policy (Cf4.3.2.1).

6.2.2.5 Level of economic development

The economic development of a country determines policies to be developed (Cf 4.3.2.4). A number of respondents 18 (22.5%) felt that Malawi is not advancing at the same pace with the rest of the world. Malawi has remained a poor nation since gaining its independence in 1964. Government has been pre-occupied with the fight against poverty with more emphasis on economic sectors particularly agriculture than social sectors. Consequently, the country is still struggling with the provision of basic social services and information is not seen as a priority. Information literacy is low, utilisation of information is low and the infrastructure is inadequate to support information access and utilization among others (Cf 4.4.2).
6.2.2.6 Existence of overarching government development policies

The study also revealed that the existence of overarching government development policies has contributed to the absence of the national information policy. This was mentioned by a number 12 (15%) of the respondents (Cf 4.3.2.4). Development policies once developed, serve as single reference documents for policy makers in government, private sector, civil society organizations, donors and cooperating partners on socio-economic growth and development priorities for Malawi. For instance government had the Statement of Development Policies from 1971 to 1998, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper from 2002 to 2006 and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy from 2006 to date. Sectors are supposed to complement government’s efforts by aligning and harmonizing their programmes and activities to priorities appearing in the national development policy. Sectors are required to draw their policy guidance from these development policies. However, information has never been featured as a priority until in 2002 when government included ICTs in the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, although not as a major priority.

6.2.2.7 International Trends

Malawi is open to international influence because the world has now become one international community of nations. Governments and international organisations have played a major role in shaping the country’s policies (OPC, 2011; Tsoka and Kutengule 2002). Some 20 (25%) of respondents observed that Malawi is party to a number of international agreements and conventions and is under obligation to comply with the provisions of these agreements (Cf 4.3.2.6). Some of the agreements include:
• The SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport. The principal aim of the Protocol in relation to the area of information is to develop and implement policies and programmes that would promote the citizens’ right of access to information (DST, 2009)

• The NEPAD Protocol on the ICT Broadband Infrastructure Network for optic fibre network connections which seeks to ensure provision of economical and efficient information and communication services (Bichler, 2008: 195)

• International copyright agreements which are aimed at protecting intellectual and industrial property like the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, Universal Copyright Convention (UCC) of and Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) (DST, 2009)

• The UN convention on International Exchange of Publications of 1958 which is aimed at the exchange of official publications and government documents between member states (UNESCO, 2012:online).

None of these agreements calls for the development of a national information policy. Respondents therefore felt that there has not been any obligation or pressure from the international level or from lobbying groups for Malawi to develop an overall national information policy but sectoral policies. Respondents also felt that sectoral policies are probably working well and there is no need to develop an overarching policy although evidence is required to determine if the sectoral policies are indeed working.
6.2.2.8 Diverse nature of the information sector

The study revealed that the absence of an overarching national information policy could be attributed to the diverse nature of the information sector. This was mentioned by 49 (61.2%) of the respondents (Cf 4.3.2.8). They observed that the policy would take a long time to develop, it may require enormous financial resources, skills and that the development process would be complex if all sectors were to be considered in a single policy. They also felt that sectoral policies once developed will inform the development of an overarching policy. However they noted that such sectoral policies often lack national direction. They further observed that sectors have different interests which may not be well articulated in an overarching national information policy. Respondents believed that people contribute well at a level they understand better and have that sense of ownership at sectoral level. They also noted that different sectors develop at different bases requiring different interventions at different times.

6.2.3 Level of competencies in relation to libraries and information services

The study established that the level of competencies in libraries and information services was low. This was indicated by the largest proportion 34 (41.5%) of the respondents (Cf 4.4.1). The results suggest that personnel working in libraries have not acquired the requisite skills to offer efficient services. User needs and working environment are continuously changing with the advancements in ICTs. This requires library personnel to continue upgrading their skills through education and training in order to meaningfully serve the ever changing information demands of users.
6.2.4 Level of development of the infrastructure in the delivery of information services

The study established that the infrastructure for delivering information services in Malawi is underdeveloped. This was mentioned by the largest proportion 70 (85.4%) of the respondents (Cf 4.4.2). Results suggest that Malawi does not have a sound ICT and library infrastructure to effectively deliver information services.

6.2.5 Capacity to generate information and knowledge

The study revealed that Malawi has the capacity to generate information and knowledge. A relative majority 27 (32.9%) of the respondents stated that the capacity to generate information and knowledge in Malawi is high when the researcher asked them about the level of capacity development in relation to information and knowledge generation (Cf 4.4.3). This means that Malawi has the human resources and institutions that are capable of generating information and knowledge.

6.2.6 Capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings

In terms of managing and disseminating information on research findings, the study revealed that the capacity was low. This was indicted by the largest proportion 44 (53.7%) of the respondents (Cf 4.4.4). The results suggest that institutions have not put in place systems to promote the flow and sharing of information from research findings. Researchers have also not acquired adequate communication skills to be able to effectively disseminate their research findings.
6.2.7 Capacity of citizens to access and utilize information

The study revealed that in Malawi, the capacity of the citizens to access and utilize information was low. This was stated by the largest proportion 43 (52.4%) of the respondents (Cf 4.4.6). The results suggest that society in Malawi has not acquired the necessary skills to access and utilise information and ICTs. Education and training enhances development of skills required to access information. The majority therefore, may not have had access to formal education which is important for developing basic information searching skills.

6.2.8 Challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi

The study revealed that challenges to capacity development in information services in Malawi included:

- inadequate highly qualified professionals
- lack of informal education system to cater for the majority of the population
- Inadequate vocational training
- inadequate technical ICT skills
- inadequate professional training institutions
- inadequate training programs
- lack of policies on human resource development
- education system does not focus on information literacy
- underdeveloped information infrastructure
- brain drain
• poor attitude of policy makers towards capacity building in the information sector, low literacy levels
• inadequate positions for highly qualified information professionals and
• wrong placement of information professionals.

The largest proportion 68 (84.0%) of the respondents however, indicated that the challenge of capacity development in information services in Malawi is that the education system does not focus on information literacy (Cf 4.4.6). It is centered on the use of text books. This suggests that the education system does not encourage students to read beyond the prescribed books because what is important is to pass the examinations. The results further suggest that students in Malawi complete their education without acquiring information literacy skills as a result they are not well equipped to exploit information resources and ICTs when they join society. Malawi may therefore end up being completely an information illiterate society.

6.2.9 Legal and regulatory framework in information services

The study revealed that there is a weak legal and regulatory framework for information services in Malawi. This was indicated by the largest proportion 61 (74.4%) of the respondents when the researcher asked them to indicate the strength of the legal and regulatory framework in information services in Malawi (Cf 4.5.1). The results suggest that Malawi has not put in place adequate and responsive legislation to promote access to information and ICTs and their utilisation. The required policies and legislation have in some cases not been developed or they are outdated and therefore not in line with current trends in the information sector or they are repressive. This affects the free flow and sharing of information.
6.2.10 Challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services in Malawi.

The study revealed that there are a number of challenges the legal and regulatory framework pose to the provision of information services which include: bureaucracy, restriction to access, restrictions to use, inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information, conflicting legal instruments, lack of enforcement of laws and lack of compliance to legal requirements, inadequate knowledge on existing legal instruments, political interference and inadequate consultations when developing legislation. However, the main challenge indicated by the largest proportion 62 (75.6%) of the respondents was inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information (Cf 4.5.2). The results suggest that the legal and regulatory framework in Malawi is not responsive to technological advancements. The new developments in ICTs have come along with legal complexities which are in some cases difficult to resolve using the existing pieces of legislation because they may not be applied in the digital environment. ICTs have the capability of undermining the old pieces of legislation (Quimbo 2003) in Malawi if new legislation is not developed.

6.3 Conclusions from the study

The study aimed at exploring the effects of the absence of the national information policy on information services in Malawi. The objectives of the study were to: find out the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information access in Malawi; establish factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi; find out the extent to which the absence of an
overarching policy has affected capacity building in information services in Malawi and; identify the legal and regulatory framework implications of the absence of such a policy in Malawi.

The study revealed that access and utilization of information in Malawi is low. There is inadequate information infrastructure to provide access to information; the publishing industry including the publishing of research results is underdeveloped; Access to information produced by government and government institutions is low and; libraries are experiencing numerous challenges in facilitating access to information. Democratized access to information is therefore compromised in Malawi.

The study established that the absence of an overarching national information policy is attributed to the following: the motivation for the development of sectoral information policies; lack of an institutional framework to guide the development of the policy; lack of financial and technical capacity; lack of political will, political history of the country; level of economic development; existence of overarching government development policies; international trends; and the diverse nature of the information sector.

The study revealed that capacity of citizens to access and utilize information in Malawi is low. Society lacks the skills required to access and utilise information and ICTs. The education system does not focus on information literacy. Competencies in the delivery of information services in Malawi are low because of the low level of education and training. The capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings is low despite having the capacity to generate information and knowledge. This has affected access and utilization of information and its availability in libraries.
Finally the study found that Malawi has a weak legal and regulatory framework for information services. Malawi does not have adequate and responsive policies and legislation to promote access to information, its utilization and use of ICTs. The framework has not provided for adequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information. Some of the legislation is old requiring updating and in some cases it is not even developed. The legal framework is not consistent with the advancements in information technology and is likely to face overwhelming challenges in the ever changing digital environment. Consequently library services are affected since libraries are subject to a range of pieces of legislation.

6.4 Recommendations

The general recommendation emanating from the findings of the study is that Malawi needs an overarching national information policy which would articulate and address issues regarding access to information, capacity building in terms of skills and infrastructure, and the legal and regulatory framework. Information is a cross cutting issue requiring an all-encompassing policy. Sectoral information policies would draw their policy direction from the overarching national information policy. This would avoid overlaps and contradictions among sector policies and enhance coordination. However, the following are specific recommendations regarding access to information, capacity building and the legal and regulatory framework in Malawi.

6.4.1 Access to information in Malawi

- It is recommended that government should expedite the development of a policy and relevant legislation on access to information. Government produces a lot of
information which is very vital to the citizenry for their day-to-day life. Government therefore has a moral obligation to share such information with the public whether there is demand for it or not.

- It is recommended that government should come up with a policy to promote the publishing of relevant local content in local languages which should be made available to those who need it to enhance the reading culture. People prefer reading content they can relate to, about their own culture and in their own language rather than fact books from elsewhere (Jönsson and Olsson 2006:52).

6.4.2 Capacity Building

- It is recommended that government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should expedite the introduction of information literacy in the school curriculum from primary school level to university. This would promote information literacy among the citizenry.

- It is recommended that government should come up with a human resources development policy for the public sector and make a deliberate effort to train library and information professionals up to PhD level through the provision of scholarships and grants.

- It is recommended that government should develop a library policy that would promote the development of school libraries in primary and secondary schools and public libraries in all towns, districts assemblies and rural growth centres equipped with Internet facilities.
6.4.3 Legal and regulatory framework

- It is recommended that there is need to constantly review and harmonize policies and legislation in the information sector so that they are in line with current trends. However, government should desist from reviewing legislation to suit its own interests.

- It is recommended that government should expedite the development and enactment of relevant pieces of legislation which are not yet in place to allow free access and utilisation of information and ICTs.

6.5 Future research

This study focused on the effects of the absence of a national information policy on information services rendered by libraries, archives and documentation centers. There is need for another study to look at the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on other types of information services such as the media, the ICT industry and R&D information services in order to have a complete picture of the sector.

Malawi has taken the pluralistic approach of developing information policies at sectoral level without an overarching national information policy. This is bound to bring overlaps and duplications among sectoral information policies with no formal mechanism in place to harmonise them. Comprehensive studies are required to evaluate sectoral information policies to ascertain their adequacy in developing information services in Malawi.
6.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented a brief summary of results, conclusions from the study and recommendations based on the four research questions: What are the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information access in Malawi, what are the impediments to the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi, how has the absence of an overarching national information policy in Malawi affected the development of human resources and information infrastructure in Malawi and what are the implications of the absence of an overarching national information policy on the legal and regulatory framework in Malawi. The chapter has also highlighted the areas for further research.

6.7 Final conclusion

The study has revealed that Malawi has a brittle national information policy framework for information services. Malawi has not done enough in laying the policy terrain for the development of information services. Malawi has adopted the development of sectoral information policies without an overarching operational framework for the sector. As a result there is no policy guidance to drive the development of sectoral policies and supporting legislation. Consequently, the development of policies is more reactive than systematic (Browne 1997). Furthermore, there are no mechanisms in place to harmonize sectoral information policies to avoid overlaps and duplications. So far, only a few sectors have put up information policies. Sectors are therefore developing at a different pace. Those that do not have policies and the supporting legislation are obviously lagging behind. For example Malawi does not have an ICT policy, Access to
information policy and legislation, library policy, Intellectual property policy, literacy policy, and a policy on publishing of local content. As a result of which access and utilization of information in Malawi is low, capacity building in terms of human resources is low and infrastructure is underdeveloped, and the legal and regulatory framework for information services is weak. Malawi therefore, risks lagging behind in the race to an information society and knowledge economy. Malawi has not invested enough in libraries and ICTs, information literacy and awareness and related legislation. This implies that the free flow and utilization of information is limited and the country cannot transform into an information society let alone the knowledge economy. Malawi can therefore not participate fully in the global knowledge economy.
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Appendix

Appendix 1: Response from a respondent declining an interview

Malawi Telecommunications Limited

HEAD OFFICE
Lamya House
Masauko Chipembere Highway
P.O. Box 537
BLANTYRE
MALAWI

Ref. No. MTU/CEO/060 8th July 2011

Mr. Gausi
Head of Science and Technology
National Commission for Science and Technology
Private Bag 8303
City Centre
LILONGWE

Dear Dr. Chimoyo,

RE: REQUEST FOR MR GAUSI TO CONDUCT SHORT INTERVIEWS


I would have liked to meet Mr. Gausi at an agreed time had it not been for his point of departure – that Malawi has a brittle ICT policy – which I find unacceptable. As you well know, Malawi does have a well developed ICT policy. Implementation is a different matter, however.

Sincerely yours,

Charles Chuka
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Appendix 2: Covering letter seeking authority from respondents to conduct interviews

The Chief Executive Officer
Malawi Telecommunication Limited (MTL)
P.O. Box 537
Blantyre

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR MR GAUSI TO CONDUCT SHORT INTERVIEWS WITH SOME MEMBERS OF STAFF FOR A STUDY ON "EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF THE BRITTLE NATIONAL INFORMATION POLICY FRAMEWORK ON INFORMATION SERVICES IN MALAWI."

Mr Hambani Gausi is a member of staff for the National Commission for Science and Technology and is working as a Chief Documentation and Information Services Officer. He is currently pursuing a Master's Degree programme in Library and Information Science at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa on a Malawi Government Scholarship Fund. He is required to carry out a research project in fulfilment of his degree programme. His research topic is 'Exploring the Effects of the Brittle National Information Policy Framework on Information Services in Malawi'. The aim of his study is to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi.

The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

i. To find out the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information access in Malawi

ii. To establish factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi
iii. To find out the extent to which the absence of an overarching policy has affected
capacity building in information services in Malawi

iv. To identify the legal and regulatory framework implications of the absence of such a
policy in Malawi

The findings of this study will be presented as a set of policy recommendations for the
improvement of information services in Malawi. MTL has been identified as one of the key
informants in his study because of its role in policy formulation on information. The purpose
of this letter is to request your good office to grant Mr Gausi permission to conduct individual
interviews with some members of staff of your organisation. All responses will be kept
confidential and will not identify any respondent. Information collected will only be used for
purpose of his study.

I have attached a sample interview guide for further information.

Your favourable consideration of the request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Dr. H.M Chimoyo
Director General
Appendix 3: Letter clarifying the topic of the study to a respondent

NCST/ADM/4/1

15 July 2011

The Chief Executive

Malawi Telecommunications Limited

PO Box 537

Blantyre 3

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST FOR MR GAUSI TO CONDUCT SHORT INTERVIEWS

I have the honour to refer to your letter, reference number MTL/CEO/060, dated 8th July 2011 on the above issue.

I wish to bring to your attention that it is a standard practice in the field of science that a research puts forward a hypothesis which is either supported or nullified by the results of the study based on data collected and analyzed. Mr. Gausi’s research topic is premised on the pluralistic approach of policy development in the information sector in Malawi. The current trend is that sectors are pursuing the development of sector specific information policies without an overarching policy in place. This may bring contradictions and overlaps between sectoral policies hence the use of the phrase brittle national information policy framework in his research topic.
As indicated in my earlier communication, his research is exploring the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi, not an ICT policy as purported in your letter. The study is being guided by the following specific objectives:

i. To find out the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information access in Malawi

ii. To establish factors impeding the development of an overarching national information policy in Malawi

iii. To find out the extent to which the absence of an overarching policy has affected capacity building in information services in Malawi

iv. To identify the legal and regulatory framework implications of the absence of such a policy in Malawi

I regret any misconception that may have arisen from my earlier communication.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. H.M. Chimoyo
Appendix 4: Application for clearance to conduct research in Malawi

Department of Library and Information Science
University of Fort Hare
Private Bag X1314
Alice 5700
South Africa
6th June 2011

National Commission for Science and Technology
Private Bag B303
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Dear Sir,

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAWI-JUNE TO AUGUST 2011

I would like to apply for permission to conduct research in Malawi from June - August 2011. I am a Master's Degree student in the Department of Library and Information Science at University of Fort Hare in South Africa. I am required to conduct a research project in fulfillment of the requirements of my degree. My topic is 'exploring the effects of the brittle national information policy framework on information services in Malawi'. My topic was approved by the Higher Degrees and Research Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Fort Hare.

I have enclosed my proposal, CV and a letter from my supervisor for your ease of reference. You may contact my supervisor if there is anything more you would want to find out about my research project.

I intend to start my research as soon as I get the approval.

Yours Faithfully,

[Signature]

Hambani Gausi

Applicant
Appendix 5: Approval to conduct research in Malawi

Please Reply to: Ref No.: RTT/2/20 20th June 2011

TO: Hambani Gausi, Department of Library and Information Sciences, University of Fort Hare, Private Bag XI314, Alice 5708, South Africa

CC: Academic Supervisor

Mr. Hambani Gausi

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR “EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF THE BRITTLE NATIONAL INFORMATION POLICY FRAMEWORK ON INFORMATION SERVICES IN MALAWI”

I refer to your letter dated 6th June 2011 in which you are requesting the National Commission for Science and Technology to grant you permission to carry out a study titled “exploring the effects of the brittle national information policy framework on information services in Malawi”; the study being part of your Master’s studies.

Our office has reviewed the research protocol which you had submitted and have no objection in granting you permission to conduct the study. Nonetheless, the National Commission for Science and Technology will be interested in updates of the research exercise whenever necessary. With this letter, your protocol, in its current format and substance as submitted to the NCST, is duly approved.

For further information do not hesitate to contact our office.

Yours Faithfully

Andrew Mpesi

RESEARCH OFFICER (HEALTH, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES)
For: DIRECTOR GENERAL
Appendix 6: The interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is Hambani Gausi. I work for the National Commission for Science and Technology as a Chief Documentation and Information Services Officer. I am currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. I am required to carry out a research project in fulfillment of my degree. My research topic is ‘Exploring the Effects of the Brittle National Information Policy Framework on Information Services in Malawi’. Countries world over have realised the critical role information plays in socio-economic development and have formulated national information policies to develop and harmonise information services to make them more effective and accessible. In the information/knowledge age, Malawi's participation in the wired global economy would depend on establishing well developed information services or risk exclusion. The aim of my study is to explore the effects of the absence of an overarching national information policy on information services in Malawi.

You have been selected to participate in the study because of your knowledge and experience in policy matters relating to information services in Malawi. There is no right or wrong response to any of these questions however, you are required to give an honest answer. All responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for purposes of this study. I will also ensure that any information I include in my report does not identify you as a respondent. The findings of this study will be presented as a set of policy recommendations for the improvement of information services in Malawi. The researcher will be taking down some notes during the interview session. However, I may not write that fast and I will be recording our discussion so that I don’t miss any of your comments. I hope this is okay with you?

I will proceed with the interview with your verbal consent, Sir/Madam.

Yes  ☐  No  ☐
SECTION A

Respondent’s biographical information

1. Respondent Category

Please use an “X” to indicate your category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy maker</th>
<th>Information scientists</th>
<th>Academician</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislator</td>
<td>Information services provider</td>
<td>Legal experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information user</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Your gender

Male | Female

3. Your age bracket

19-25 | 26-36 | 37-47 | 48-59 | 60 plus

4. Your highest academic qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Bachelor’s</th>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>MSCE</th>
<th>JC</th>
<th>Primary school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION B:

Access to information services

Access to information services provides the citizenry with the right to acquire and use information of whatever nature (Government information inclusive). Easy access to information is achieved by creating an environment conducive enough, for free and independent sources of information, universal availability and use of ICTs, production of local information content, and information produced using public funds being freely available to all.

5. What do you think about the level of access to information in Malawi?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Very low</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. What is your opinion on the state of the publishing industry in Malawi including the publishing of research findings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very underdeveloped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-existent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. How do you view access to information produced by government or government institutions in Malawi?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No access at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Do you think libraries in Malawi are facilitating access to information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If no, please explain briefly

__________________________________________________________________________________________

9. What do you consider to be major challenges of access to information in Malawi? (Please select as many responses as may apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of policies promoting access to information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low information literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate competencies in ICTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate information infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicity of languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of local content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information hoarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attitude of policy makers towards information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity supply problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low literacy levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What do you propose to be the solution(s) to the challenges?
SECTION C:

Impediments to the development of a national information policy

Countries in the world are now striving towards becoming information societies or knowledge economies in which the social and economic development depends on the ability to generate, access and utilise information and knowledge without restrictions. In your opinion how prepared is Malawi in becoming an information society or a knowledge society in terms of policy development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very prepared</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well prepared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not prepared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. What do you think prompts the development of sectoral information policies in Malawi? (Please select as many answers as may apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>easy access to information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>regulation of what kind of information may be accessed by who</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regulation on when information may be accessed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technology advancements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International trends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International conventions and treaties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development of new applications or systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information market forces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harmonisation of services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How does the sectoral information policy development process evolve in Malawi?

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13. What do you think would be the reasons for developing sectoral policies before an overall national policy?
14. What mechanisms are there to ensure that these sectoral information policies are in harmony to avoid contradictions or duplications?

15. The development of an overall national information policy is a world-wide phenomenon. Why do you think Malawi does not have an overarching national information policy up to now?

SECTION D: Capacity building in information services

Capacity building in information services enhances competencies and skills of individuals, communities, organisations and nations to exploit information and ICTs through training, formal and informal education including lifelong learning; development of infrastructure, systems, and technological know-how.

16. (a) What would be your view on the level of competencies in the delivery of information services in Malawi?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) What would be your view on the level of development of the library infrastructure in the delivery of information services in Malawi?
17. (a) How do you view the capacity to generate information and knowledge in Malawi?

Very high
High
Average
Low
Very low
inadequate

(b) What is your opinion on the capacity to manage and disseminate information on research findings in Malawi?

Very high
High
Average
Low
Very low
inadequate

18. What is your opinion regarding the capacity of the citizens of Malawi to access information?

Very high
High
Average
Low
Very low
inadequate

19. What do you consider to be the challenges of capacity development in information services in Malawi? (Please select as many answers as may apply)
inadequate highly qualified professionals
Lack of informal education system to cater for the majority of the population
Inadequate vocational training
Inadequate technical ICT skills
Inadequate professional training institutions
inadequate training programs
lack of policies on human resource development
Education system does not focus on information literacy
underdeveloped information infrastructure
brain drain
poor attitude of policy makers towards capacity building in the information sector
Low literacy levels
Any other (please specify)

20. In your opinion what should be done to address these challenges?

21. What would be your comment on capacity development in relation to libraries and information services?

Very high
High
Average
Low
Very low
inadequate

SECTION E:

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN INFORMATION SERVICES

Legal and regulatory framework encompasses all relevant policies, laws, regulations and implementing institutions including mechanisms that provide the framework for
information services. It is meant to establish necessary standards and systems which
guarantee the right to information access and promote the exploitation of information
and ICTs.

22. What would be your opinion on the legal and regulatory framework regarding
information services in Malawi?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very strong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very weak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-existent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. Which of the following do you consider to be challenges that the legal and regulatory
framework in Malawi pose on provision of information services?
(Please select as many answers as may apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restriction to access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions to use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate legal provisions to cover all forms of information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflicting legal instruments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of enforcement of laws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of compliance to legal requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. What do you suggest could be the solution(s) to the challenges?

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25. Is there anything you would like to add or anything you feel this interview should
have covered to enrich the study?

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Thank you for your time.
Appendix 7: Cover letter from the Department of Library and Information Science, UFH

Department of Library & Information Science  
Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities  
and Floor, Psychology Building, Alice Campus  
Tel: 040 606 2211/2122/2737 Fax: (086) 628 2932/2449  
OR 086 620 1566  
Mobile: 082 928 8324/082 800 0478/079 946 1418  
Email: kmoatuwele@ufh.ac.za OR fshayandi@ufh.ac.za  
OR conderr@ufh.ac.za

08/06/2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir,

RE: INTRODUCING MR. HAMBANI GAUSI (REGISTRATION NUMBER 201112571)

This serves to formally introduce the above named as a full time Master’s student in the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa. Mr. Gausi has proposed to conduct research on a research project titled “Exploring the Effects of Brittle National Information Policy Framework and Information Services in Malawi.” Mr Gausi has successfully defended the research project proposal before the Higher Degrees and Research Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Upon successful oral defence, Mr. Gausi’s research proposal has been approved by the Higher Degrees and Research Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and duly registered by the University of Fort Hare as a research project. As the student’s supervisor, I am very satisfied that the topic is researchable and Mr. Gausi may go ahead to collect data for his research project. It is being increasingly realized that a national information policy has an important role to play in ensuring access to information in both developed and developing nations of the world.

Mr. Gausi would like to collect data for the research project by way of interviewing those deemed to be sources of relevant information in Malawi. As a Department, we request that you assist Mr. Gausi to distribute questionnaires and/or conduct face-to-face interviews. Any other assistance given to Mr. Gausi would be highly appreciated. Please do not mind that you do not know much about the concept of national information policy. For any further information about Mr. Gausi, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Prof EM Ondari-Okemwa,  
Supervisor and Head, Department of Library and Information Science.
Appendix 8: Observation guide

A. Availability of ICTs in Libraries

Type of ICTs available in the library (Desktops or laptops)

How many computers are available for use in the library

B. Use of the ICTs

What are they used for?

Who uses the available computers (Users or members of staff)?

How many users use the computer facilities?

Is there Internet in the library?

How fast is the Internet?

Is access free or a fee is required?

If a fee is required, how much do users pay?

C. Library collection

What is the proportion of the Malawiana collection to the general collection (volumes)?

What is the composition of the Malawiana like (Research articles, dissertations, books etc)?